



rec'd 10/3/89

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS TRENTON (LPD-14)
FPO NEW YORK 09588-1716

5750
Ser/ADM 455
28 SEP 1989

From: Commanding Officer, USS TRENTON (LPD 14)
To: Director of Naval History (OP 09BH), Washington Navy Yard,
Washington, D.C. 20374

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Encl: (1) Photograph and biography of Captain, R. J. Reader, USN
(2) Photograph and biography of Captain, R. M. Nutwell, USN
(3) 1988 Chronology
(4) 1988 Command Narrative
(5) TRENTON ltr dtd 16 January 1989
(6) TRENTON ltr 5080 Ser 084 dtd 28 February 1989
(7) Rakow, W. M., COL, USMC, "Marines in the Gulf - 1988", Marines Corps Gazette, December 1988
(8) Inhoff, R. G., CAPT, USMC, "HMLA-167 Presence in the Persian Gulf"
(9) Diagram of Topside Weapons Locations on board USS TRENTON during Persian Gulf Deployment JAN-JUL 1988
(10) Plan of the Day
(11) TRENTON GATORGRAMS dtd
(12) TRENTON Welcome Aboard Pamphlet
(13) Photograph of USS TRENTON

1. Submitted in accordance with reference (a).

a. BACKGROUND: USS TRENTON (LPD 14), an amphibious transport dock, is named for the historic capital of New Jersey that was founded by an 18th century shipowner and businessman, Colonel William Trent. The present USS TRENTON is the third U.S. vessel to bear the name. The first was a steam sloop of war commissioned in 1874. The second was a light cruiser, CL 11, commissioned in 1924, which served with Asiatic, Caribbean and Southeast Pacific fleets during World War II. The keel for the present TRENTON was laid on 8 August 1966. She was christened on 3 August 1968 by Mrs. Richard J. Hughes, wife of the then governor of New Jersey. TRENTON's mission is to transport, land, and support Marine forces on a hostile shore. The amphibious transport dock (LPD) is a very versatile class of amphibious ship. TRENTON can carry over 900 troops plus their vehicles, equipment, weapons, ammunition and supplies. She also carries landing craft in her floodable well deck and topside, and she can operate helicopters and VTOL aircraft from her flight deck. TRENTON participated in the 1983 liberation of Grenada, was a member of the Multinational Force off the coast of Beirut, Lebanon, in 1983-1984, and was a participant in Operation PRAYING MANTIS in April 1988 during a six month deployment to the Persian Gulf.

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY

b. COMMANDING OFFICER:

- (1) Captain Robert J. Reader, USN, 1 JAN - 5 FEB 1988
- (2) Captain Robert M. Nutwell, USN, 5 FEB - 31 DEC 1988

c. HOMEPORT: Norfolk, Virginia

d. CHRONOLOGY: Attached as enclosure (3).

e. NARRATIVE: Attached as enclosure (4).

f. STATISTICS:

- (1) Navigation: Miles traveled for 1988: 26,506
- (2) Aviation: Landings: 3915
Aircraft moves: 2435
JP5 aviation fuel delivered: 350,000

2. Enclosures (5) through (13) are submitted to supplement the 1988 Command History


J. A. CURTIS

1988 CHRONOLOGY

01 - 19 JAN	IMAV WITH USS SHENANDOAH
20 - 23 JAN	AMMUNITION ONLOAD YORKTOWN NWS
24 - 27 JAN	INPORT NORFOLK, ONLOAD MAGTF 2-88
28 JAN	UNDERWAY FOR ATLANTIC OCEAN TRANSIT ENROUTE MEF
05 FEB	CHANGE OF COMMAND
07 FEB	INPORT ROTA, SPAIN
07 - 13 FEB	TRANSIT MEDITERRANEAN SEA
14 FEB	SOUTHBOUND TRANSIT OF SUEZ CANAL
15 - 21 FEB	TRANSIT RED SEA AND INDIAN OCEAN
22 FEB	TRANSIT STRAITS OF HORMUZ, ENTER PERSIAN GULF
24 FEB	TURNOVER WITH USS PORTLAND
26 - 09 APR	PROVIDED LOGISTIC/SUPPLY/ MAINTENANCE SUPPORT FOR MCMGRUCOM MSO'S
10 - 14 APR	MOORED AD DAMMAN, SAUDI ARABIA
14 APR	UNDERWAY, USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS HITS MINE, PROVIDED MEDEVAC AND SAR OPERATIONS
18 APR	OPERATION PRAYING MANTIS, SASSAN OIL FIELD
20 - 22 APR	MOORED DUBAI, U.A.E., FOR AMMUNITION OFFLOAD OF USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS
23 - 21 MAY	PERSIAN GULF OPERATIONS PROVIDING CONVOY ESCORT AREA SURVEILLANCE Q-ROUTE SURVEY AND MAGTF/MSO AND CRUDES SUPPORT
23 - 03 JUN	MOORED, MINA SULMAN PIER, BAHRAIN, FOR BOILER MAINTENANCE

04 - 22 JUN	PERSIAN GULF OPERATIONS PROVIDING CONVOY ESCORT, AREA SURVEILLANCE, Q-ROUTE SURVEY AND MAGTF/MSO AND CRUDES SUPPORT
23 - 24 JUN	TURNOVER WITH USS DUBUQUE
26 JUN	TRANSIT STRAITS OF HORMUZ OUT OF PERSIAN GULF
27 - 03 JUL	TRANSIT INDIAN OCEAN AND RED SEA
04 JUL	NORTHBOUND TRANSIT OF SUEZ CANAL
05 - 09 JUL	TRANSIT MEDITERRANEAN SEA
10 - 12 JUL	INPORT MALAGA, SPAIN
13 - 21 JUL	TRANSIT ATLANTIC OCEAN
22 JUL	MOOR MOREHEAD CITY, NC OFFLOAD MAGTF 2-88
23 JUL	UNDERWAY TIGER CRUISE
24 JUL	MOOR LITTLE CREEK, VA COMPLETE MAGTF 2-88
25 - 23 AUG	LEAVE AND UPKEEP, LITTLE CREEK, VA
24 - 26 AUG	UNDERWAY VACAPES
27 - 28 AUG	INPORT NORFOLK, VA
29 - 02 SEP	INPORT AND UNDERWAY MITT
03 - 06 SEP	INPORT NORFOLK, VA
07 - 09 SEP	AMMUNITION OFFLOAD, "W" ANCHORAGE
10 - 11 SEP	INPORT NORFOLK, VA
12 - 13 SEP	ANCHOR CHESAPEAKE BAY, DLQ'S
14 SEP	INPORT NORFOLK, VA
15 - 17 SEP	UNDERWAY, OPPE

17 - 20 SEP

INPORT NORFOLK

21 SEP - 31 DEC

DPMA METRO MACHINE NORFOLK, VA

COMMAND NARRATIVE

While deployed to the Persian Gulf as a unit of the U.S. Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR) from February to June 1988, USS TRENTON (LPD 14) pioneered a new role for the versatile amphibious transport dock. TRENTON relieved an LPH as the host ship for a Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force (CMAGTF), and she relieved an LSD as the "mother ship" for the six ocean minesweepers (MSO's) in the Gulf.

Since this was the largest detachment of helicopters ever embarked in an LPD for extended operations, some reconfiguration of the ship was required. An aviation intermediate maintenance support capability was provided by installing standard Marine field support vans on TRENTON's Upper Vehicle Storage deck. (This installation required a modification to the ship's electrical distribution system.) Additionally, vans were installed topside to serve as a ready room and administrative office. Most importantly from an operational standpoint, TRENTON's large flight deck was certified for four new deck edge launch/recovery spots in addition to the two standard LPD centerline spots. The new spots provided the additional flexibility necessary to operate eight helicopters effectively and to meet MIDEASTFOR commitments. TRENTON's Helicopter Operations Bill was extensively revised to accommodate the new flight deck loading and certification.

During the deployment, CMAGTF 2-88 provided security detachments and weapons training to other units in the Gulf. MAGTF helicopter operating from TRENTON and other platforms conducted Aerial mine-hunting, provided protection for friendly ships from surface and helicopter attack, and provided indispensable logistics support. The MAGTF also trained extensively for its various contingency missions. This training paid off on 18 April when TRENTON/CMAGTF 2-88 played a key role in neutralizing the Iranian Sassan oil platform in the central Persian Gulf during Operation "PRAYING MANTIS."

An unexpected addition to TRENTON's unusual flight deck load on this deployment resulted from the mine damage to SAMUEL B. ROBERTS (FFG 56) on 14 April. Following this incident, the ROBERTS' SH-60B LAMPS MK III helicopter from HSL-44 Det 5 was embarked on TRENTON, where it remained for the remainder of the deployment. Fully integrated into TRENTON/MAGTF operations and command/control procedures, the LAMPS significantly enhanced surface surveillance and mine-hunting capabilities while continuing to support other units in the Gulf.

TRENTON provided logistical support to the MSO's in both operating and rear base areas. The logistical support consisted of fuel, fresh water, electricity, crew services, repairs, and resupply of food, parts, and material. Most support was provided by bringing the MSO alongside while TRENTON was at anchor. When necessary, the crew services, resupply, and repair support was provided via TRENTON boats.

The LPD also provided important operational support of the MSO's. TRENTON's communication division assisted with incoming and outgoing messages and guarded selected circuits for the MSO's. MAGTF helicopters, the LAMPS, and TRENTON's

weapons helped to defend the MSO's against surface and helicopter attack. Helicopter mine-hunting in advance of the MSO significantly improved the safety of mine clearance operations.

Except when preparing for and executing an actual contingency mission ("Praying Mantis"), the MAGTF and MSO support missions proved not only compatible but complementary. Most MAGTF training could be conducted in conjunction with MSO support operations, and most importantly the helicopter-equipped LPD was able to provide significant operational support to the MSO's.

In late June of 1988 USS DUBUQUE (LPD 8) relieved TRENTON as the MIDEASTFOR LPD. The successful dual-mission deployments of these two ships demonstrated the excellent versatility of the highly-capable amphibious transport dock. The ability of the LPD to act as a "mini-LPH/LHA" offers policymakers an attractive option for scenarios in which a larger ship is not desired for political or military reasons. The MIDEASTFOR LPD deployments also provide another outstanding example of Navy/Marine teamwork and ingenuity successfully applied to a tough national security challenge.



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS TRENTON (LPD-14)
APO NEW YORK 09588-1718

5000

16 JAN 1989

From: Commanding Officer, USS TRENTON (LPD-14)
To: Commander, Naval Surface Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, Norfolk, VA
23511-6292

Subj: PROPOSED PRESS RELEASE

Encl: (1) Proposed Text

1. Enclosure (1) is submitted for review and approval for release to the Office of the Mayor of Trenton, N. J., for possible publication in local newspapers. This release was written at the request of the Mayor's office.

R. M. NUTWELL

Copy to:
CJTfME
COMPHIBGRU 2
COMPHIBRON 12

The amphibious transport dock USS TRENTON (LPD-14) left Norfolk, Virginia on January 27, 1988, with 30 officers and a crew of 400 men for the Persian Gulf. Originally scheduled for a deployment to the Mediterranean Sea at the end of February, TRENTON was ordered in early January to prepare to sail for the Persian Gulf by the end of the month.

During her six month deployment, TRENTON performed two primary missions: she served as host ship for Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force 2-88, (a 350-man U. S. Marine force with 8 U. S. Marine helicopters) and as "mother ship" for the 6 U. S. Navy minesweepers on station in the Persian Gulf.

TRENTON's tasking was unique. Her flight deck was crowded with 8 U. S. Marine helicopters, 2 CH-46 "Sea Knights", 4 AH-1T "Cobras", and 2 UH-1N "Hueys", the most ever operated from the flight deck of an LPD. Also, taking minesweepers alongside for replenishment and repairs had never been attempted by an LPD.

The officers and crew of TRENTON used innovative and creative methods to solve problems faced during the six month cruise. Here is a brief account of her voyage:

The real work of the deployment started long before TRENTON left Norfolk in late January. When word was received in December that TRENTON was heading for the Persian Gulf less than four weeks hence, preparations began in earnest. Because a ship like TRENTON had never embarked 8 helicopters for an extended deployment, there was no prior experience to draw upon for reference. Special efforts were made to ensure that all the equipment essential for the repair and maintenance of the aircraft would fit on an LPD.

Supplies for a six month voyage had to be carefully loaded. Many of TRENTON's 400-man crew put in extra long days to make preparations for the trip, sacrificing precious time with family and friends in order to ensure everything was ready.

Because of the tight fit, many unique requirements for equipment stowage were creatively solved. A gear locker for TRENTON's quartermasters was converted into office space for intelligence operations and a portable ready-room was installed on an exterior deck topside for use by Marine pilots for briefings and planning sessions.

During her Atlantic crossing, TRENTON's crew and the 350 U. S. Marines learned how to live and work in close quarters. Marine pilots practiced landings and take-offs at the direction of Navy flight deck crews. General quarters and damage control drills were rehearsed to familiarize men with the equipment and techniques they needed to know to handle emergencies that might arise in the Gulf.

On February 7th, TRENTON stopped for 6 hours to refuel in Rota, Spain. She steamed through the Suez Canal on February 13th, then traversed the Red Sea and portions of the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea to enter the Persian Gulf via the Strait of Hormuz on February 21st.

Monday, February 22nd, found TRENTON in the Persian Gulf heading northwest with her escort, the guided missile frigate USS JOHN A. MOORE. In mid-afternoon two speed boats of a type operated by Iranian forces approached the ship at high speed. TRENTON issued radio warnings and fired flares at the approaching craft, but these signals went unheeded. TRENTON's crew was ordered to general quarters stations as warning shots from a .50 caliber machine gun were fired across the bow of the lead boat, causing it to veer away. The event impressed the crew and embarked Marines that operations in the Persian Gulf would require constant vigilance.

After almost a month-long voyage, TRENTON anchored in late February just off the coast of Bahrain, near the city of Manama. The United States Navy has a small "Administrative Support Unit", also known as "ASU", there. Service men stationed in the Gulf can cash checks, mail letters, and relax away from the shipboard environment. ASU has swimming pools, a library, and a club where American music can be heard on a juke box. Overseas telephones are one of the most popular features there!

Manama is also the capital city of the nation of Bahrain. TRENTON Sailors and Marines rapidly discovered that customs in the Middle East were very different from those in the United States. The crew was advised to be on their best behavior while on liberty, as Bahrain is a conservative, Moslem country. Conservative dress, including long trousers even in the mid-summer heat, is required. Drinking alcohol in public is not allowed. Many shops and restaurants close for prayer in the afternoon and early evening. Despite the differences from Western customs, TRENTON's Bahraini hosts were gracious and helpful, and crew members enjoyed liberty in Bahrain.

In the Gulf, TRENTON quickly learned to operate continuously, providing U. S. minesweepers with food, water, fuel, spare parts and repairs at all hours of day or night. Sailors on the minesweepers came aboard TRENTON for personnel services and "liberty." The "sweeps" are so small that coming aboard TRENTON was like a trip to town for their crews. Marine aircraft made runs to ASU for morale-boosting mail, which was sorted on TRENTON for distribution to the smaller U. S. ships in the Gulf.

Along with support to the minesweepers, TRENTON was home to the only U.S. ground force in the Gulf - the U.S. Marines. Marine helicopters from TRENTON performed almost round-the-clock flight operations. Their air crews searched for mines, performed surveillance, and accompanied convoys of warships and oil tankers through the Persian Gulf.

The marines and sailors of TRENTON continued to train for all contingencies. Exercises for defending the ship, coming to the aid of a

stricken ship, and handling large numbers of wounded personnel were held throughout the deployment.

From April 10th to the 14th, TRENTON visited the city of Dammam in Saudi Arabia. While in Saudi Arabia, TRENTON acted as a good will ambassador for the United States. Various types of equipment were displayed on the flight deck for viewing by visitors to the ship. Representatives of the Saudi Armed Forces examined U. S. Navy and Marine equipment, and Americans working in Saudi Arabia also visited TRENTON.

The American community in Dammam and neighboring cities hosted a "take-a-sailor-to-dinner" program. TRENTON sailors and marines were invited to the private homes of Americans and other Westerners and enjoyed an evening of home cooking in a relaxed, home-like atmosphere. The break was badly needed after more than a month of non-stop operations at sea. TRENTON in turn held a reception onboard for local diplomats and business men. In addition, some of TRENTON's officers and men were guests at the residence of the American ambassador to Bahrain for an evening of food and fellowship.

On Thursday, April 14th, TRENTON left Dammam to resume operations in the Gulf. After such a restful port visit, the Gulf waters seemed calm and quiet. At about 5:00 PM, the reality of war in the Persian Gulf quickly returned. Word was passed that the frigate USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS had suffered an underwater explosion, later confirmed to have been caused by an Iranian mine.

TRENTON set a course for the ROBERTS to assist her damage control efforts. Equipment and fresh water were flown to the "Sammy B.". One of the 10 wounded sailors from the ROBERTS was flown to TRENTON where he was treated for burns to his upper body, arms, neck and face. After he was thoroughly examined and stabilized, the patient was flown from TRENTON to ASU Bahrain for further care.

On April 15th TRENTON supported operations that located the minefield in which ROBERTS was hit and identified the mines as Iranian in origin. The events of April 14th and 15th set the stage for Operation PRAYING MANTIS, the destruction of Iranian oil platforms and naval units in response to the Iranian mining of international waters. TRENTON and her embarked Marine task force, with the destroyers USS MERRILL and USS MCCORMICK, formed Surface Action Group "BRAVO".

On Monday, April 18th, Group "BRAVO" assaulted the Iranian Sassan Gas-Oil Separation Platform in the central Persian Gulf. After the occupants were warned and allowed to evacuate, the platform was taken under fire by the destroyers and helicopters. TRENTON's Marines then boarded the platform and set charges to destroy its potential for use by the Iranian military. When TRENTON's group departed the area, leaving the platform a smoking ruin, a decisive blow for freedom of navigation had been struck.

While in the Gulf, TRENTON hosted a number of distinguished visitors. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William J. Crowe, USN, visited TRENTON following Operation PRAYING MANTIS to present two combat action awards. Other visitors included the Commander in Chief, Central Command General George B. Crist, USMC, Representative Beverly Byron (D-MD), Representative Wayne Owens (D-UT) and the U. S. Ambassadors to Bahrain and Dubai, U.A.E.

After the USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS struck the mine, TRENTON embarked the ROBERTS' SH-60B helicopter, raising the number of helicopters operating from TRENTON's already-busy flight deck to nine. The Marine Air Combat Element, together with the Navy detachment from the ROBERTS, logged over 2200 flight hours and 3500 landings during the deployment, an unprecedented level of flight activity for an LPD. TRENTON's flight deck crews completed over 2300 aircraft moves without a significant mishap.

In late June, 1988, as the USS TRENTON left the Persian Gulf for the return voyage to Norfolk, Virginia, TRENTON received the following message from the Commander, Joint Task Force Middle East:

"Your support of the MSO's as "mother ship" can only be described as outstanding. Undaunted by the severe climate, regional tensions, high tempo, or the difficulties inherent at the end of a long logistical chain, you provided critical service and support to the U. S. minesweeping operation in the Persian Gulf. The professionalism, dedication and enthusiasm shown by the men of TRENTON and the MAGTF providing security, helicopter escort and surveillance support for the MSO's and tanker escort missions were most noteworthy.

When, in the aftermath of the mining of USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, U. S. Forces launched a retaliation strike against Iranian assets, the TRENTON/MAGTF team was again called upon and again responded superbly. Your efforts were instrumental in the neutralization of the Sassan Oil Platform, one of the primary objectives of the mission."

On the way home, TRENTON sailors and marines enjoyed a well-earned visit to the city of Malaga on the Spanish "gold coast".

On July 24th, TRENTON moored at the Naval Amphibious Base at Little Creek, Virginia (in Norfolk), having steamed over 25,700 miles in six months and successfully carried out operations crucial to U. S. policy in the Persian Gulf. The joy of reunion with family and friends was combined with pride in the ship's accomplishments during a unique and challenging deployment.

TRENTON is commanded by CAPT Robert M. Nutwell, USN, of New Providence, New Jersey. Contingency MAGTF 2-88 was commanded by COL William M. Rakow, USMC.

TRENTON/MAGTF 2-88 TEAM ON DUTY IN THE GULF

As 1987 came to a close, the crew of USS Trenton was busy making preparations for a late February 1988 deployment to the Mediterranean Sea. These plans changed drastically when the Trenton was scheduled to leave for the Arabian Gulf with less than 30 days notice.

When Trenton left Norfolk on 27 January 1988 her task was unique: proceed to the Arabian Gulf to act as a minesweeper (MSO) support ship and as host ship for Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force 2-88.

The MAGTF is composed of four units: a command element, a ground combat element, an aviation combat element, and a combat support service element. "Our MAGTF is task organized based upon the assigned mission," states Major Sam Brinkley the MAGTF Executive Officer. "The broad goal is to be a contingency force supporting the Commander Joint Task Force Middle East. Also, we are working to support the Trenton in her mine counter-measure support role."

Previous Contingency MAGTF'S were embarked on a large amphibious assault ship, specifically an LPH. When Trenton was selected to replace both the LPH and LSD (the previous MSO "mothership") in the Middle East Force, MAGTF 2-88 had to slim down in order to fit aboard Trenton. This meant only the most versatile and essential gear was on-loaded. Even so, eight helicopters from Marine Light/Attack Helicopter Squadron 167 (HML/A 167) were squeezed on to Trenton's flight deck for Arabian Gulf operations.

The tough task of planning the onload of equipment was the job of Trenton's Combat Cargo Officer, First Lieutenant (b) (6). "The equipment embarked was unusual for an LPD and created many challenges. Normal loading techniques had to be modified to accommodate the outsized items such as the Aviation Element's maintenance vans. Alterations were made to the well deck so the maintenance vans could receive electrical power from the ship. The onload was completed with only a few hours to spare before getting underway."

Because of the tight fit, many unique requirements for equipment stowage were creatively solved. A gear locker for Trenton's quartermasters was converted into the Joint Intelligence Center and a portable ready-room was welded to the weatherdecks on the 0-2 level.

As well as supporting the MAGTF, Trenton is providing a full range of "mother-ship" services to the minesweepers and frigates patrolling the Gulf.

"Being a mother-ship is an unusual role for an LPD," states Trenton's Supply Officer LT Al (b) (6). "We have to be very flexible. We take on stores from a Combat Stores Ship then give the smaller vessels what they need."

If the minesweepers cannot pull alongside Trenton, stores can be delivered by the ship's LCM-8 Assault Craft carried in the well deck. "We not only supply food stores but also parts support, repair support, disbursing services, ship's store and barber services, medical and dental support, and even hotel services!," states LT (b) (6)

Minesweepers crews remain in the gulf four months at a time. When it is time for the new crew to step aboard there isn't enough berthing aboard the MSO for both crews, so, "HOTEL TRENTON" provides the additional berthing required during the crew rotation period.

Repair services are one of the many areas in which Marine and Navy elements complement each other. Trenton's Hull Technicians can handle the largest welding and repair jobs while the Marine Combat Service Support Element has the equipment to supplement the ship's capability to repair delicate radar and communications gear.

Other services offered to the minesweepers and frigates by Trenton include a sail loft that can make awnings and hatch covers, two ship's stores selling everything from necessities like socks and shaving cream to such luxuries as cassette tapes and jewelry, and medical and dental departments that offer the most immediate access to health care in the Gulf. Between TRENTON and the embarked MAGTF repair services are available for valves, gauges, teletypewriters, communication equipment, refrigerators, and small arms to name only a few.

As for the crew, morale is very high. Lance Corporal (b) (6) from New River, North Carolina volunteered for this mission with the Marine Aviation Combat Element. "The Gulf is where the action is. We work 12 hours on and 12 hours off with the Ship's Air Department on board. We don't get too many weekends off but liberty in Bahrain is exciting."

SN (b) (6) reports, "We're not afraid to go to General Quarters. I'm a look-out and we're working together with the Combat Information Center. We can spot contacts way out with our binoculars and watch them after CIC tells us where to look. The Marines are really great. They help us in working parties when we load supplies or have to move gear around the ship."

A typical lunch time aboard Trenton can give an indication of the diversity of the ship's mission. Sailors and Marines eat elbow-to-elbow on the mess deck. Sailors from a nearby Minesweeper are shopping in the ship's store for toiletries, watches, postcards and gifts for friends in the States. Just outside on the flight deck, helicopter rotors beat at the air as Marine aircraft take off and land, directed by Navy flight-deck personnel. Fork-lifts shuttle pallets of MSO supplies between storage spaces and the flight deck while the ship's Boat and Aircraft (B & A) Crane lowers them into the waiting LCM-8 craft alongside. Near the ship's bridge, members of the Marine Ground Combat Element clean a .50 caliber machine gun as Navy lookers scan the horizon for contacts.

On 20 December 1988 the USS TRENTON received the Joint Meritorious Unit Award for her contribution to OPERATION PRAYING MANTIS. The award was presented by Captain Thomas S. Treanor, Commander Amphibious Squadron Twelve.

Operation PRAYING MANTIS was the code name given for actions taken by the United States against Iranian assets in the Gulf in retaliation for the mining of international waters by Iran. The USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS struck an Iranian anti-shipping mine in international waters on April 14, 1988. During PRAYING MANTIS on April 18, 1988, TRENTON participated in the boarding of the Iranian Sassan Gas-Oil separation platform.

In addition to the Joint Meritorious Unit Award, eleven TRENTON sailors received the Navy Achievement Medal from the Commander of the Joint Task Force Middle East for contributions made during TRENTON's six month deployment to the Persian Gulf from February to July 1988.

In his remarks, Commodore (b) (6) noted that TRENTON's actions in the Persian Gulf helped shorten the conflict between Iraq and Iran and helped keep international waters free from terrorism. Additionally, the Commodore complimented TRENTON for a successful yard upkeep period at Metro Machine Shipyard in downtown Norfolk. Also present at the ceremony was Colonel William Rakow, USMC, Commander of Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force 2-88, the embarked U.S. Marine contingent on TRENTON during the cruise.

Captain Robert M. Nutwell, the Commanding Officer of TRENTON, encouraged the crew to take pride in their past accomplishments as they face the challenges of a new operating cycle with determination to further enhance the ship's performance.

Navy Achievement Medal recipients were:

ICC (SW) (b) (6)

RM1 (b) (6)

BT1

BT1

MR1 (SW) (b) (6)

BMC (SW) (b) (6)

GMC2 (SW) (b) (6)

BM2 (b) (6)

ET1

RM1

DK2

"Nobody does it better" is Trenton's motto. Here in the Gulf the crew is working hard to make everyone a believer.

CAPTAIN ROBERT JAMES READER
UNITED STATES NAVY

Captain Robert J. Reader was born in (b) (6) on (b) (6). Following his graduation from the University of Illinois in 1961, he attended Officer Candidate School and joined USS PASSUMPSIC (AO-107). Subsequently he served as Executive Officer, USS ACME (MSO-508), attended the Surface Warfare School Department Head Course, and was assigned to USS KENNETH D. BAILEY (DDR-713).

In July 1967 he reported to the staff of Commander Destroyer Squadron SIXTEEN which was then deployed to Southeast Asia. He then served as Assistant Professor of Naval Science at Iowa State University from July 1969 to August 1971, followed by attendance at the Naval War College Command and Staff course. During this period he received a Masters Degree in International Affairs from George Washington University.

In July 1972 he became Flag Secretary to Commander Amphibious Group ONE. This assignment was followed by tours as Executive Officer, Navy Recruiting District Detroit from July 1973 to July 1975 and Executive Officer, USS HARLAN COUNTY (LST-1196) from September 1975 to March 1977.

From April 1977 to May 1979 he served as Flag Secretary to Commander in Chief U. S. Atlantic Fleet. Captain Reader then commanded USS SUMTER (LST-1181) until July 1981. From July 1981 through July 1984 he served as Operations Officer for COMSTRIKFLTANT and as the Amphibious Operations Officer for Commander SECOND Fleet. Captain Reader then attended the Naval War College, Naval Warfare Course and reported to the OPNAV Staff as the Amphibious/EOD/IUW Branch Head (OP-372).

Captain Reader is married to the former (b) (6) of (b) (6). They have three children: (b) (6).

His decorations include: The Meritorious Service Medal with Gold Star in lieu of second award. Joint Service Commendation Medal and Navy Commendation Medal with Gold Star in lieu of third award.

CAPTAIN ROBERT M. NUTWELL

COMMANDING OFFICER
USS TRENTON (LPD-14)

Captain Nutwell was born in (b) (6) and spent his childhood in Maryland and New Jersey. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1966 and entered flight training immediately, receiving his wings in October 1967. He has served in three A-7 Corsair II squadrons, including command of VA-105 in 1979-1980. Following a tour on the COMNAVAIRLANT staff Captain Nutwell entered nuclear propulsion training, followed by assignment as Executive Officer of USS NIMITZ (CVN-68) from June 1984 to July 1986. Captain Nutwell then served in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (Naval Warfare Directorate) as the director of a warfare analysis group until November 1987. He took command of TRENTON on 5 February 1988 enroute to the Persian Gulf.

Captain Nutwell is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School and the Naval War College. He holds a Master's Degree in Operations Research and is qualified as a Surface Warfare Officer. His decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal with two Gold Stars, and the Air Medal.

Captain Nutwell is married to the former (b) (6) who works as a reference librarian at the Virginia Beach Central Library. They live in Virginia Beach with their sons (b) (6) (17) and (b) (6) (13).



SASSAN GOSP 18 April 1988—living quarters ablaze.

Marines in the Gulf—1988

by Col William M. Rakow

This article tells the story of how Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force (CM) 2-88 formed, deployed to the Gulf, and contributed to achieving our National aims of world peace and freedom as they relate to what Gen George B. Crist, commander in chief, U.S. Central Command (CinCCent), referred to as "guerrilla warfare at sea." As of this writing, peace in the Gulf region appears to be taking hold. Most matters regarding continued operations there, however, remain classified, a factor that required me to omit certain specific details of CM 2-88's deployment.

MAGTF Activation

In early November 1987, Col (now BGen) James M. Myatt, officer in charge, Special Operations Training Group (SOTG), II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), returned from a WestPac liaison trip where he assisted CM 1-88 (Col Frank Libutti) at Subic Bay in its workups en route to the Gulf. On 6 November, at Col Myatt's debriefing in Norfolk for the commanding general, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, LtGen Ernest T. Cook, although not yet tasked to provide the next Gulf MAGTF, recognized that probability and acted decisively. I was notified at 6th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) that evening by telephone of my designation as the MAGTF commander. Armed with detailed information provided from Col Myatt's trip on the structure and equipment of CM 1-88, we began preparations. By 12 November, all key personnel and units were identified, and we gathered at Camp Lejeune that night to lay out our game plan.

Getting any MAGTF out of town is a challenge. Few commanders, however, have the benefit of two months' warning and being provided top-notch people and highly trained units across the board. CM 2-88 was not intended to be a special operations capable unit, but our strength lay in the fact that in some

way every unit and almost each member had been part of, or involved in fielding, special operations capable Marine expeditionary units or MEU(SOC)s. Our force reconnaissance platoon (Capt Timothy P. Kraft) had been together for more than two years and had recently returned from a deployment with the 26th MEU(SOC). Our ground combat element (GCE) (Maj, now LtCol Clyde S. Brinkley, Detachment 1, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines) recently returned from a deployment with the 24th MEU(SOC). The GCE was 100 percent SOC trained and contained several veterans who had served in the Gulf as members of the security detachments on the two mobile sea bases located there. The SOC "mindset" had a profound influence on all of us as we went about our deployment preparations.

By 23 November, when CM 2-88 was officially activated, much had already been accomplished. As we began training, we faced uncertain missions and also uncertainty about the continuing need for a MAGTF in the Gulf. We pressed on, focusing on our capability to conduct an amphibious raid on short notice. As we perceived it, this type of operation would present the most difficulty. Once perfected, our raid skills could be transferred readily to many of our other potential missions. December brought five days of "blue-water" workups aboard USS *Guam* (LPH 9), our designated LPH. In early January, key leaders and four of our helicopters made a trip to the Gulf of Mexico to become familiar with oil rigs similar to those being used as operational bases by the Iranians.

Throughout these hectic preparations, we watched the "traffic" as the National Command Authority and CinCCent evaluated the role of the LPH, its embarked H-53 airborne mine countermeasures helicopters, and the MAGTF itself. Would we deploy? Would there be an amphibious ship or a continued Marine presence in the Gulf? In early January, the answer

arrived designating USS *Trenton* (LPD 14) (Capt Bob Nutwell, USN) as the LPH replacement and as the "mothership" for the six ocean minesweepers and C-128's new "home." That settled, we set about retaining our structure while reducing our manning from 700 to approximately 400 Marines and sailors. "Double hatting" key personnel and extensive cross-training in the GCE and combat service support detachment (Capt Kenneth D. Wickwire, CSSD-20) allowed us to retain capabilities. Together with *Trenton*, we solved our biggest challenge—that of operating an eight-aircraft composite helicopter squadron from an LPD for six months. The solution involved redesign of the flight deck for six-spot flight operations and conversion of the upper vehicle stowage area to an organizational and intermediate maintenance facility. These innovations proved effective and may open a new chapter in aviation capable ship/small MAGTF operational procedures. On an LPH, aviation maintenance facilities and supplies are provided by the ship and fleet aviation type command. Our aviation pipeline throughout the deployment was directly from Marine Aircraft Group (MAG)-26 at New River, NC. On 25 January 1988 we embarked pierside at Norfolk, and the next day our aviation combat element (ACE) (LtCol Larry D. Outlaw, Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMLA) 167(-)(Rein)) made its first flight "to the boat." HMLA-167 brought four AH-1T Cobras, two UH-1N Hueys, and two CH-46E(SRM) Sea Knights.

The Trip Over

It took us 26 days at 14 knots to go from Norfolk to the Strait of Hormuz. This included a five-hour stop for fuel at Rota, Spain, and a short wait at Port Said, Egypt, for the southbound Suez Canal convoy. En route to Rota, the "enemy" was rough weather and its impact on the flight operations we needed to become proficient. High seas, no plane guard ship, no search and rescue helicopter, and moonless nights slowed our training. Nevertheless, careful reading and interpretation of *NWP 42*, the "bible" for LPD flight operations, provided us enough "gray area" to fly on the "edge" and do what had to be done. Once in the Mediterranean, the seas calmed, and daily drills, flight operations, and task-oriented training picked up accordingly. Our apprehension, alertness, and proficiency increased each day as we neared the Gulf.

Training Concept

Our goal was to enter the Gulf in a fully combat ready status. We placed emphasis on the team training needed to perform assigned and implied tasking. We realized that our effectiveness and value to the commander, Joint Task Force, Middle East (JTFME), would be based on our demonstrated ability to respond rapidly to a broad range of employment options. Back at the first meeting on 12 November, we had decided to develop a "playbook" with set plans for each of our operational capabilities. We developed a "play" for each of those capabilities that would enable us to respond within four to six hours from noti-

fication. Our playbook included generic intelligence requirements for specific options, a rapid response planning guide to ensure no step in the time-tested planning process would be overlooked, communications plans, a simple but comprehensive format for a mission confirmation brief, detailed troop and equipment checklists, and the various landing documents/tables and ammunitions requirements to support each "play." In coordination with the Navy we broke out our contingency ammo and prepackaged it to support each option. This ensured that all ammo, separately palletized and marked, with all M16 magazines loaded, could be in the hands of our Marines on short notice.

Daily drills, frequent staff exercises, and weekly situational training exercises (STXs) honed our skills. We built each STX (a training technique devised by II MEF SOTG) on a potential real-world scenario wherein no one on the "blue" side (including the commanding officer) was aware of the threat situation and problem play. An independent control cell (in our case two to three selected staff officers) developed each exercise based on our training priorities. In its purest form, the STX begins with intelligence buildup and concludes with a critique after the actual employment of forces in a free-play exercise. The staff follows doctrinal procedures using rapid response planning techniques. The troops rehearse, follow their inspection checklists, and, whenever feasible, draw ammunition and test fire their weapons. The critique is a key part of the STX. In our case, critiques were often brutal, shooting many holes in what we commanders and our staffs conceived and blessed as workable plans. While not meeting our goal of holding an STX every week throughout the deployment, we came close. We entered the Gulf with a "working" book of 21 different "plays" and departed with a refined document of 15.

We developed this book to respond to specific potential missions involving real-world targets (e.g., oil complexes, ships, islands). We prepared target folders, terrain models, scale models of oil rigs, and map packets, thereby gaining area familiarity. We tested our plans in STXs. After each critique, we made adjustments. Thus, the tedious and time-consuming planning was done in advance. This approach freed us, once a mission was given, to devote our effort to tactics in the air and on the ground. As no actual threat situation will occur as we want it to, our playbook was sufficiently flexible to allow us to run what we called "audibles" to adjust our plans to match the actual situations.

The rapid planning also develops habits that ensure adherence to the basics. When "assemble the battle staff" was passed over the IMC, everyone knew where to go and who should be there. In our STXs, our "battle staff" (or "orders" group) contributed as a team to the entire process from mission analysis to supervision. If commander's guidance was incomplete, the staff and commanders made suggestions and asked questions. Once a decision was made and a mission commander designated, the en-

tire staff supported that commander. Early warning orders and following the "half rule" were hard requirements. This rapid response planning process is another product of the MEU(SOC) program that we refined until it became second nature to us.

Operations

On 20 February 1988, we conducted a "turnover" in the Gulf of Oman with CM 1-88 and USS *Okina-wa* (LPH 3). On 22 February, we steamed through the Strait of Hormuz, swapped out our two mobile security barge sea base detachments in the northern gulf, and began routine operations. As in any slowly developing operation, tactics, service-unique procedures, and the structure to command and control forces are evolutionary. Vague missions, confusion, and determining how a ship or unit is best employed is to be expected. So it was within JTFME and for the MAGTF. Essentially, JTFME's job is to keep the Gulf open for U.S. flagged shipping and to provide U.S. presence. The Gulf is over 400 nautical miles long, relatively shallow (we anchored every night), and dotted throughout with small islands and gas-oil separations platform (GOSP) complexes. Every day, numerous military and commercial aircraft and ships (plus hundreds of small craft) ply the Gulf air space and waters. Sorting out the visual and radar contacts and avoiding floating and moored mines demand constant vigilance. Our daily routine involved operations and training in support of the general missions shown in Figure 1. Although most of our time was employed in traditional Marine-related matters, some tasking was nonamphibious in nature, falling into the "excess-sortie" and "emergency defense of the task force" categories. Such tasking, however, always came from proper authority and through MAGTF channels.

Operations within JTFME were based on mutual understanding and cooperation. That's not to say there weren't occasional disagreements and "rice bowl" problems. In most cases, we worked these out on scene. Of particular note was the teamwork we developed with the destroyers and frigates. Daily visits, providing of training teams for crew-served weapons, and naval gunfire exercises became the norm. The JTF naval component operated under standing procedures governed by *NWP 10-1, The Composite Warfare Commander's Manual*. Commanders were desig-

nated for major warfare areas through general operational messages (OPGENs) issued by RAdm Anthony Less, who was the commander of JTFME and the officer in tactical command (OTC). Major warfare commanders were assigned for antisurface warfare (ASUW), antiair warfare (AAW), mine countermeasures (MCM), and (in the OPGEN promulgated in March 1988) I was placed in a warfare commander status. Operational tasking came through "OPTASK" messages issued by the warfare commanders. Composite warfare doctrine provides warfare commanders wide latitude. Often, a single ship with dual capabilities (e.g., AAW and ASUW) will work simultaneously for two commanders, and its captain may be placed in a dilemma. Teamwork and cooperation among the warfare commanders kept such situations to a minimum, and good communications with the OTC allowed us to "raise the flag" when necessary.

Operation PRAYING MANTIS

On 14 April, as we completed a three-day port visit to Dammam, Saudi Arabia, the USS *Samuel B. Roberts* (FFG 58) entered a freshly laid minefield in the central gulf. The ship was heavily damaged when it struck an M-08 contact mine while attempting to back out of the field. *Trenton* proceeded at best speed to provide assistance. As the first warship at the scene, we were able to assist in medical care and evacuation. Also that afternoon, HMLA-167 helicopters located three additional mines, which we were able to photograph, videotape, and help destroy. It was these photographs that provided proof to the National Command Authority that the mines were both freshly laid and (by their "lot numbers") from the same series of M-08 mines found aboard the *Iran Ajar* when that ship was seized in September 1987.

On 15 April, I received a radio call from our MAGTF liaison officer aboard the flagship (Maj, now LtCol, William C. Darner) informing me that retaliatory strikes were being planned. The next morning, the principal staff and I took a CH-46 into Bahrain to join in the planning aboard the flagship, USS *Coronado* (AGF 11). Two other key commanders were also present: Commander, Destroyer Squadron 22 (Capt Don Dyer, USN), the current ASUW commander; and Commander, Destroyer Squadron 9 (Capt Jim Perkins, USN) who flew in from the Gulf of Oman. By the time we arrived aboard *Coronado*, the targets had been identified. Our role was to help prepare a plan of execution, submit that plan for approval, and "work" the details. We were well aware that our proposals would be examined in detail by Gen Crist in Tampa and by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington.

At the initial briefing early on the afternoon of 16 April, I could not believe how fortune smiled on us. The two platforms targeted for attack were the SIRRI and SASSAN complexes. The previous week, we had run an exercise using SASSAN as our "real-world" target. Immediately, I requested SASSAN be assigned to us. We got it. We devoted the next few hours to discussing the organization for combat, command rela-

MAGTF MISSIONS

- Armed escort/reconnaissance in support of U.S. flagged ships/convoys
- Surveillance, reconnaissance, and intelligence collection
- Security for mobile sea bases
- Standby reaction and reinforcement force
- Logistic support
- Mobile training teams
- Contingency operations

Figure 1.

tionships, rules of engagement, naval gunfire support, air support from the carrier battle group (CVBG) in the Gulf of Oman, search and air rescue, and the like. As evening approached, most of the MAGTF staff returned by helicopter to *Trenton* to begin preparations. The MAGTF communications-electronic officer (Capt Gene A. Steffanetta) and I remained overnight to complete the plan.

The JTFME concept of operations called for retaliatory strikes as a measured response to the laying of a new minefield in international waters. CJTFME formed three surface action groups (SAGs) to conduct operations in the central and eastern gulf. In the east, it was SAG "D" with Capt Dyer as on-scene commander embarked aboard USS *Jack Williams* (FFG 24) with USS *Joseph Strauss* (DDG 16) and USS *O'Brien* (DD 975), which later engaged Iranian units in the vicinity of Aba Musa island and from Banddar Abbas. To the west of that action, SAG "C" under the command of Capt Jim Chandler, commanding officer of the USS *Wainwright* (CG 28), was composed of *Wainwright*, USS *Simpson* (FFG 56), and USS *Bagley* (FF 1069). Its mission was to attack the SIRRI GOSP. SAG "B", our SAG, was composed of USS *Merrill* (DD 976) (Cdr Craig Covington), USS *Lynde McCormick* (DDG 8) (Cdr Terry Etnyre), and USS *Trenton*. Command relationships under which we Marines normally operate did not apply. Still, we followed the principles contained in NWP 22-2/LFM 0-1, *Doctrine for Amphibious Operations*, where possible. Capt Perkins as on-scene commander became "ad hoc" commander amphibious task force, while I served as commander landing force (CLF). The night of 16 April, with our S-3A (Capt John L.

OPERATION PRAYING MANTIS

TASK ORGANIZATION
SAG "B"/CM 2-88

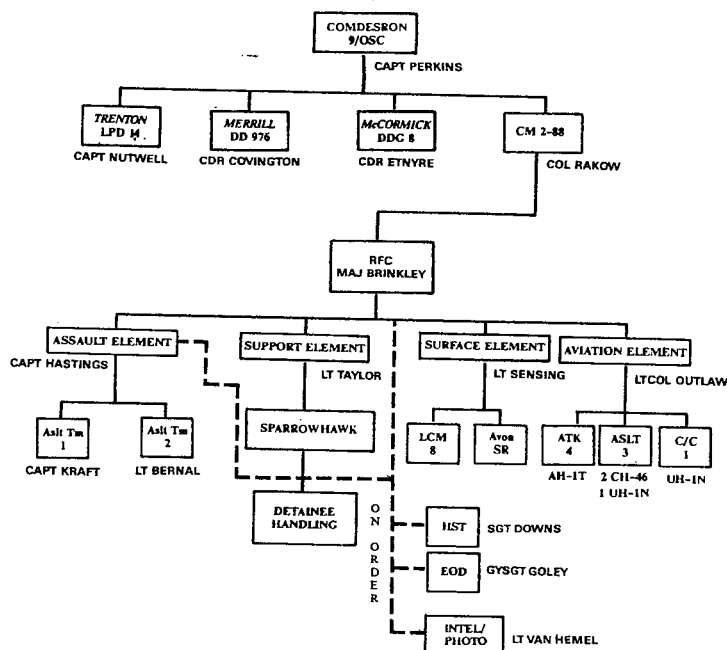
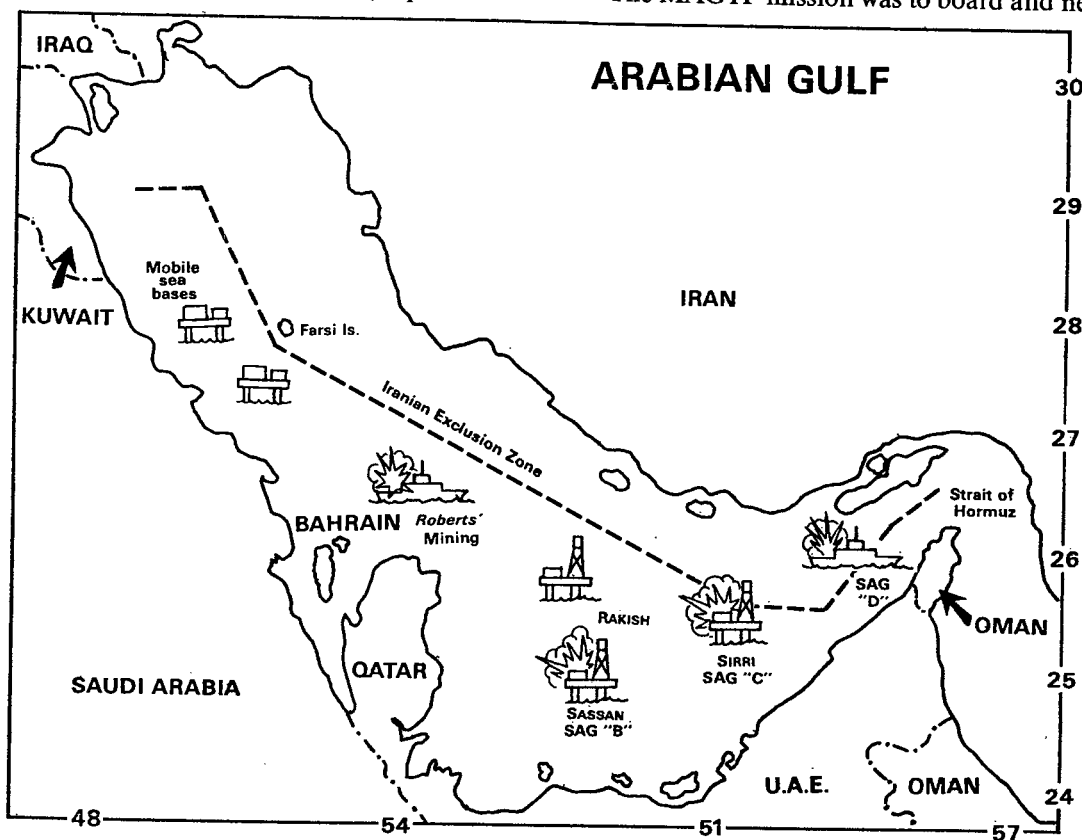


Figure 2.

Mahoney), two ANGLICO noncommissioned officers, two radiomen, and a USN chief air controlman, I cross-decked to Capt Perkin's flagship (*Merrill*). We paralleled doctrinal functions in a "micro" sense by creating in *Merrill's* combat information center a supporting arms coordination center (SACC), a helicopter coordination section (HCS), and a landing force operations center (LFOC).

The Mission

The MAGTF mission was to board and neutralize



the SASSAN GOSP and to destroy its oil production capability. We were to minimize enemy casualties and impact on the environment. The environment was stressed because of the large United Arab Emirate oil rig, ABU AL-BUKUSH, approximately eight miles to the south. Also, we were to provide a detainee handling team to SAG "D" to care for the large number of detainees that were expected to come their way.

The Threat

SASSAN is a large, seven-platform complex. The various platforms, connected by erector set-like catwalks, house wellheads, gas-oil separators, maintenance areas, pumps, generators, and billeting areas. Platform legs hold the work areas approximately 30-50 feet from the water's surface. Each platform had two or more decks and one had a helicopter pad. We knew the GOSP was manned by 20-30 Iranian Marines armed with at least three ZU 23-2 anti-aircraft guns and other crew-served and individual weapons. We suspected the presence of surface-to-air missiles (SA-7/Stingers). Unaware of civilian crew's status, we believed some workmen to be on the GOSP.

The Concept

Our plan was simple. At 0755 on 18 April, we would warn the Iranians to evacuate. Based on their response, we would conduct the boarding operation using naval gunfire and fire from attack helicopters as necessary. Although this was a "boarding" operation, we conducted it as a raid just to be sure. Figure 2 contains our organization. We planned to land an assault element of 42 personnel in two CH-46s and one UH-1N. In the event touching down proved infeasible, we were prepared to put the entire element in by "fast rope." *Trenton's* LCM-8 and our two force reconnaissance Avon Seariders were available for emergency withdrawal. Our explosive ordnance demolition, photo, intelligence, and helicopter support teams were on standby. The raid force commander (Maj Brinkley) and fire support coordinator (Capt Vernon C. Scoggin, 2d ANGLICO) would be in a command and control UH-1N helicopter equipped with the ASC-26 communications package.

Preparations

By the time I returned to *Trenton* on the morning of 17 April, preparations were well underway. Our mission confirmation brief went at 1300. Our plan required only minor adjustments from our "Recovery at Sea" appendix in our playbook. Detailed inspections, rehearsals, and the test firing of weapons took place throughout the day (including the test firing of TOW missiles from our Cobras). Although we were ready to react in a shorter timeframe, the need to rendezvous with the other ships gave us extra time that we used to our advantage. At 1800, when within range, I crossdecked again by CH-46 to *Merrill*. We planned to get a good night's rest, but additional tasking from CJTFME caused a midnight planning session for the MAGTF battle staff. Informed of a standby mission to proceed north to RAKISH GOSP

once we completed our SASSAN Mission, Maj Brinkley assembled the battle staff, made tentative plans for the follow-on mission, and kept me informed by radio.

D-Day, 18 April

Everyone was up as dawn broke. We were ready. The two destroyers took station 4,000 yards to the east of SASSAN in a north-south "race-track" pattern, with *Trenton* 7 miles to the southeast. The air plan called for aircraft to begin launch at 0615, the warning to begin at 0755, with L-hour "on order" probably not later than 0815. From the bridge of *Merrill*, we gave the warning to evacuate in Arabic, Farsi, and English over military and civilian air distress nets and over the standard commercial ship-to-ship circuit in the Gulf. Our Navy linguist was a native Iranian. We could see activity on the GOSP and listened in on the radio conversations. Fortunately, two Iranian tugs were alongside and able to evacuate what we counted to be 29 men, all apparently civilians. They asked for and we granted a little more time. At approximately 0803, certain that many more remained on the GOSP, we opened up with *Merrill's* 5-inch/.54 caliber Mk45 guns using variable timed fuses (air bursts). The battle was on as the GOSP returned fire using ZU 23-2s aimed at both *Merrill* and our two AH-1T Cobras, which were in a hover just to the north of us. (See Figure 3 for the chronology of major events.) Our planned L-hour was delayed until 0926 by the actions taken to engage and then allow continued evacuation of the GOSP. Through coordination by radio, the tugs returned between naval gunfire salvos to pick up survivors from both the GOSP itself and out of the water. All told, we counted another 30 or so evacuees. In the meantime, Maj Brinkley and LtCol Outlaw in the command and control helicopter faced other challenges. Several fires and the possibility of booby traps forced adjustment to the landing plan. "What if" drills had prepared us for this. Changes were passed to the transport helicopters and further passed to the embarked teams. (Headsets for the embarked team leaders are essential requirements and were standing operating procedure for all MAGTF flights. Team leaders carried note pads to ensure messages were passed and clearly understood by all.) Maj Brinkley decided to land by fast rope and designated alternate landing points.

The second challenge was the aircraft "recycling" necessary to keep our eight helicopters at high fuel state. As L-hour was pushed back, frequent communications between the command and control helicopter and the *Merrill* kept the airborne leaders aware of our negotiations with the Iranians, and LtCol Outlaw cycled helicopters onto *Trenton's* and *Merrill's* decks. Normally, an LPD is able to refuel two helicopters at one time. Once again, *Trenton-MAGTF* teamwork and innovation proved invaluable. We rigged two 500-gallon helicopter expedient refueling system (HERS) bladders on the port side enabling the simultaneous refueling of four instead of two aircraft.

SASSAN GOSP CHRONOLOGY

TIME	EVENT
0615C	Helicopter launch begins.
0706C	Surface element (USS <i>Trenton</i> LCM 8 and MAGTF Avon Searider) launched.
0715C	Assault element loaded aboard the helos.
0740C	Helicopterborne force in position to southeast of GOSP.
0755C	Five-minute warning issued. Initial evacuation of 29 civilians.
0803C	GOSP engaged by NGF delivered by USS <i>Merrill</i> and USS <i>McCormick</i> . NGF employed selectively at southern half of GOSP using air bursts in order to show seriousness of action. Enemy returned fire by ZU 23-2. Flashes clearly visible as was impact in water near USS <i>Merrill</i> /AH-1Ts. Fire silenced by NGF.
0803C-0922C	Evacuation of GOSP continues by tug. Selective use of NGF.
0922C	MAGTF commanding officer issued final coordinating instructions to raid force commander.
0924C-0926C	NGF prep.
0926C	Assault commenced with prep fires by two AH-1T Cobras.
0931C	Assault element inserted by fast rope on GOSP; two AH-1Ts provide close-in fire support.
0945C	Surface element ordered to position one half mile from GOSP for possible surface withdrawal of assault element due to secondary explosions and fuel on the objective.
1005C	Objective secure.
1007C	Intel, photo, and EOD teams inserted.
1023C	Assault element captured weapons with accessories and ammunition, including one ZU 23-2, one RPG-7, and one 12.7mm machinegun. Additionally, two ZU 23-2s were destroyed in place.
1051C	Withdrawal commenced. Intel, photo, EOD, security teams continue tasks.
1116C	Assault element commander requested confirmation of demolition plan. Deliberate placing of charges continued.
1130C	Raid force commander requested helo support team for external load recovery of captured weapons.
1140C	Surface element returned to <i>Trenton</i> .
1156C	Assault element leader provided situation update. 15 Marines on GOSP, estimated one hour needed to complete demolition charges on four of the seven platforms.
1303C	Withdrawal completed.
1307C	Raid force commander debriefed on board <i>Merrill</i> .
1310C	Mission accomplished. Demo charges detonated. Battle damage assessment: target neutralized according to plan. Northern (seventh) platform was left undamaged to prevent long-term environmental damage. Explosions continued for approximately 20 minutes.
1340C	MAGTF battle staff conducts rapid planning cycle for RAKISH GOSP.
1410C	RAKISH OP canceled. MAGTF/ <i>Trenton</i> ordered to proceed to vicinity of SIRRI GOSP.
1636C	CJTfME directs cross-deck of helo det to USS <i>Wainwright</i> .
1758C	Two AH-1Ts airborne from <i>Trenton</i> to <i>Wainwright</i> .
2005C	AH-1T Det arrived on <i>Wainwright</i> .
2015C	One AH-1T vectored from <i>Wainwright</i> to investigate possible surface contact.
2101C	<i>Wainwright</i> lost radio comm and radar contact with AH-1T after aircraft reported radar lock-on.

Figure 3.

Once aboard the GOSP, the assault teams began a systematic search using standard close-quarters battle tactics. Standard equipment for search teams included MP5 9mm machineguns, MX-300 handheld radios with whisper mikes, and "flash bang" grenades to blind possible occupants of the rooms.

At 0945, progress came to a halt as intense fire on platform #2 caused 23mm and 12.7mm ammunition to cook off. Secondary explosions and numerous fuel spills and fumes caused the assault element commander (Capt Thomas M. Hastings, Company B, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines) to put things on hold and alert us to a possible emergency extraction. From *Merrill*, we could see the fires and hear these explosions as we waited for Capt Hastings' recommendation. Again, we were fortunate, and as things quieted down, Capt Hastings ordered the search to continue. The rest went smoothly with SAG "B" as we continued following the plan. Reports of Iranian F-4s and numerous surface and air contacts required us to remain at

a high state of alertness. Sorting out flights of Saudi Arabian F-15s, civilian news helicopters, and UAE gunboats from actual threats is no easy task. Our ninth helicopter, the SH-60 (LCdr Tim Mathews) inherited from *Roberts*, played a valuable role using its link-11-capable radar surveillance system. This aircraft was to remain with the *Trenton*-MAGTF team until completion of the deployment.

We were off the GOSP at 1303. At 1310, the detonation of 1,300 pounds of explosives could be seen for miles. After a quick debrief and planning session with Maj Brinkley and LtCol Outlaw aboard *Merrill*, preparation for our attack on RAKISH began in earnest as SAG "B" proceeded north at maximum speed. Aboard *Trenton*, the first order of business was head counts, weapons checks, and redistribution of ammunition. We had done well and sustained no friendly casualties. Although we encountered no opposition once on the GOSP, our Cobras received fire as they approached. Once we decided to use prep



1stLt Ronnie Bernal crosses catwalk with Assault Team 2.



Assault Team 2.



Soviet twin 23mm automatic antiaircraft gun ZU-23 on SASSAN GOSP.

fires, we weren't going to take any undue risk and brought maximum fires to bear. On the GOSP itself, not one accidental round was fired by our assault element Marines. We were good, but much could have gone wrong. The raid force and SAG "B" eagerly anticipated our arrival at the next objective. Frankly, I believed we were pushing our luck as pilot crew day and lack of sleep was beginning to take its toll. I was satisfied with our achievements and relieved when the order came down to cancel the RAKISH mission and directed the three SAGs to take a defense/alert posture. What would be the Iranian response? Had they had enough? Apparently they had.

As evening approached, I received an order to provide a two-plane detachment to USS *Wainwright*. That ship did not have an embarked helicopter detachment, and CJTFME determined that the threat situation warranted MAGTF assets to assist in the defense of SAG "C," which was approximately 50 miles to the east of us. By 2005, one helicopter had landed and was in the process of shutting down when the *Wainwright's* radar detected what was believed to be a large contact 15 miles to the east. The ship sent our remaining airborne AH-1T Cobra to identify this contact. Shortly thereafter, the crew reported radar lock-on and apparently flew into the water as they attempted to evade what they perceived to be hostile fire. The loss of Capts Stephen C. Leslie and Kenneth W. Hill had a profound impact on each of us, but we pressed on as we knew they expected us to do.

The next two months in the Gulf were routine. Routine for *Trenton* and the MAGTF meant continued operations in a state of very high alert. Prepared for any irrational Iranian act, we pressed ourselves and continued with reaction drills, contingency planning, and STXs.

Comments, Observations, and Lessons Relearned

When you think about it, we performed only as the American people expected us to perform. The Navy-Marine Corps team as a force in readiness is supposed to be able to move out fast and perform well. Is this fact or fiction? Are we training as we expect to fight? Are we spending too much time at the MEB/MEF level for high intensity war in Europe and Korea at the expense of basic tactical proficiency? How much time will we have to prepare for the next conflict? Do we have enough units that are truly ready? These are key questions that must concern us all.

Experience in the Gulf confirmed several of CM 2-88s initial premises:

- It was primarily effectiveness in the "basics" that enabled CM 2-88 to get the job done and provide CJTFME the flexible, capable force he needed. Figure 4 outlines a shopping list of what those "basics" actually were.

- We can't afford to fail. Our MAGTFs must be capable, creditable, and follow standard operational procedures, techniques, and tactics. (When a JTF commander gets a ship, he knows what it is capable of doing. When he gets a MAGTF, he's not sure

THE BASICS

- Small unit technical and tactical proficiency
- Simplicity
- SOPs/checklists/"playbook"
- Staff planning procedures
- Battle staff/"orders" group
- The half rule
- Mission brief—preformatted/standardized
- Communication plan
- Air plan
- Fire support plan
- Common reference system
- Withdrawal plan
- Bump plan
- "No go" plan
- Ammunition procedures
- Rehearsals
- Weapons test
- Everybody understands

Figure 4.

what it is or what it can do. Unfortunately, Marines aren't always sure either.)

- We need to train with live ammunition and operate our force under realistic conditions. We need to be safe, but we need to take the measured risks essential to ensure combat readiness.

- We must expect to be committed as part of a joint task force given vague missions and uncertain conditions. To do this requires that key leaders understand our own and other Services' tactics and procedures at the operational level, not at the DOD/unified command level. As a corollary, in the prosecution of any mission, the commanders who execute the mission must also plan it. Further, because of the expected confusion inherent in such operations, we must avoid "reinventing the wheel" and parallel our proven doctrinal principles insofar as possible.

- Our communications planning must be simple, redundant, and understood by all. At the tactical level, leaders must get back on the nets. We must be able to speak clearly using personal call signs on "covered" nets. Commanders must be able to recognize each others' voices on the air. We must practice in the command and control aircraft with the ASC-26 package and in the C-7. Comm will work.

Return Home

CM 2-88 debarked at Morehead City, NC, on 22 July and on 28 July, "stood down" at a family day and awards ceremony at Marston Pavilion, Camp Lejeune. As in every deployment and operation, success is achieved through the efforts of those whose true reward is in their knowledge of a job well done. The maintenance effort and tactical competence of HMLA-167 was truly superb. CSSD-20 was remarkable in its ability to sustain us. The impact of our six-man 2d ANGLICO detachment far exceeded its size. Our infantry were just what infantry should be. No other commander had been blessed with finer sailors and Marines. A bond and special feeling grew among, and will forever remain with, us. This is what being a Marine is all about.

USMC

HML/A-167 Presence in the Persian Gulf

by CAPT Kenneth G. Inhoff, USMC

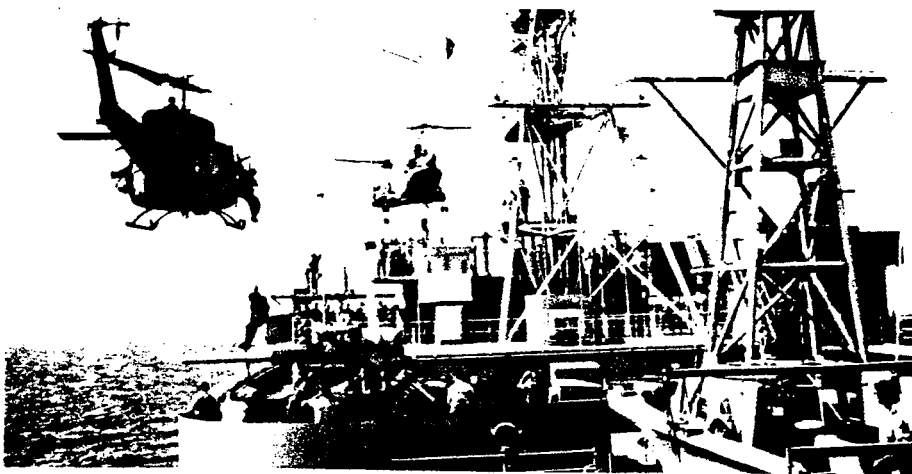
From the designation in early January of USS TRENTON (LPD-14) as home for a task organized Marine Squadron of eight helicopters, to the retaliatory strike on the SASSAN Iranian Gas Oil Separation Platform (GOSP) on 18 April 1988, the word "routine" left our vocabulary. Our missions of armed escort and reconnaissance in support of U.S. flagged shipping, and airlift support from two mobile sea bases in the Persian Gulf would expand to challenge each of us beyond our wildest expectations.

Although an LPD is an air capable ship, it was in no way designed to support eight Marine helicopters for extended operations - until the need arose. Along with that need came the first challenge -- developing the means for the safe and efficient maintenance, refueling, arming/dearming, deck spotting, launching, controlling and recovering of one or all eight of our air assets. Six Mobile Maintenance Facility (MMF) vans and three MMF supply vans were rolled into TRENTON's upper vehicle stowage to provide an intermediate maintenance capability. TRENTON's two deck spots were expanded by painting four additional spots (each outboard and adjacent to the standard spots) enabling launch of up to four aircraft simultaneously. Helicopter Expedient Refueling System (HERS) bladders were placed on TRENTON's flight deck or in her port catwalks to enable refueling of four helicopters at once - a capability that later proved invaluable during the SASSON GOSP strike. Arming and dearming procedures were developed and refined until an alert aircraft could be ready for armed launch from a cold start in five minutes. The efforts of TRENTON's deck crew and air boss in the spotting, launching and recovery of three types of helicopters would have rivaled the best orchestrated symphony. TACRON-22's sole representative aboard TRENTON developed our instrument procedures and provided us with invaluable services as air traffic controller and Helicopter Direction Center supervisor. By the time we reached the Straits of Hormuz, we had refined the basics of this new form of

shipboard operation. TRENTON and its complement of helicopters were now a part of our nation's presence in the Persian Gulf.

Every moonlit night available, ANVIS-5 Night Vision Goggles (NVG) training was conducted. We experimented with various aircraft external lighting configurations, including infrared searchlight covers, infrared chemlights and infrared position lights to be used when the threat

lanes, navigation buoys, and oil rigs. Multiple land ADF and TACAN stations were replaced with a very few floating TACANs and ship UHF homers. We began to train with crews from HSL-44, using their airborne search radar capabilities, to refine techniques for airborne vectoring and ranging. Combined with our night flight techniques and ordnance capabilities, vectoring for surface contact identification became a useful "back



HML/A-167 Fast Rope Training aboard USS Trenton (LPD-14)



Iranian occupied Sassan Gas Oil Separation Platform (18 April 1988)

of detection precluded using conventional aircraft lighting. A building-block approach to NVG training was continued until we could comfortably fly multiple aircraft formations at 50 feet above the water with minimal illumination.

Navigation training took on new meaning. Instead of using 1:50,000 scale ground maps, we were using 1:250,000 scale overwater maps. Depictions of roads, rivers, and powerlines were replaced by shipping

pocket" capability.

Overwater delivery was another variable from the norm. Fortunately, small boat/barge targets were available for our use and gave us the needed opportunity to update our basics in overwater delivery of TOW missiles, 2.75 inch rockets, 20mm, .50 caliber, and 7.62 mm munitions. During every opportunity while on station in the Gulf, overwater targets

Continued on page 18

HML/A-167....continued from page 17

were constructed, floated and destroyed as we perfected our techniques. Our familiarity with and faith in our ordnance systems gave us that "warm fuzzy" feeling that we could defend ourselves and those units we were tasked to support, as well as delivering lethal strikes should the need arise.

Contingency operations training would not be complete without repeated rehearsals in fast rope delivery techniques. Developed by other forces and perfected by the FBI for fast insertion of personnel from a hovering helicopter, the Marine Corps has adopted fast rope as a faster and safer technique over rappelling. Our building block approach again progressed from hovering over the deck of TREN-TON to low level, high speed approaches to the superstructures, catwalks, and bridges of the LPD, destroyers, and cruisers. The culmination of our efforts resulted in the night NVG precision emplacement by fast rope of highly trained personnel from 2nd Force Recon Platoon aboard the superstructure of a cruiser underway. The Commander Joint Task Force Middle East (CJTfME) had another trick in his bag.

Our familiarity with secure voice communication and aircraft survivability equipment grew as well. Covered communications became the norm instead of the exception. Varying mission status and airborne changes to tasking necessitated continuous use of secure UHF and VHF frequencies. Our constant exercise of KY-58's kept them working. Development of a user-friendly program for the ALE-39 chaff and flare dispenser based on the suspected threat and the knowledge of our equipment's capability led to yet another basic, yet often overlooked, tactical advantage. The ALE-39 in conjunction with our APR-39 radar warning receiver gave us the ability to remain alert to the threat radars and weapons and to react to them in time to save our aircraft and crew.

Our high level of readiness and continuous training paid off during our daily tasking on station. Of primary concern to CJTfME was the safe passage of U.S. flagged shipping through the Gulf, support of the mobile sea bases, and minesweeping operations. Squadron helicopters played a major role in each of

these missions, having trained to the challenge.

Ship convoy escorts were required on numerous occasions. Two attack (AH-1T and UH-1N) helicopters flying parallel to and forward of the convoy provided identification and early warning of floating mines as well as protection against small boat attacks - the two most formidable threats to the commercial ships.

Specific area minesweeping was a continual challenge facing all our crews. A mine or suspected mine identified by minesweepers or other ship or aircraft was reason to investigate that area in a more detailed search. Our helicopters operated in sections, usually aboard a CG or FFG as a staging and/or refueling platform, to assist minesweepers with an aerial search of a specific corridor or area. On three occasions, mines were spotted from the air and later blown in place by explosive ordnance personnel. If required, those personnel were air lifted and water inserted on scene.

General Quarters drills, alert conditions and the near sinking of USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS by a mine continually reminded us that these missions, although, sometimes laborious, were anything but routine. On 15 April, we were informed that the United States was planning a retaliation on Iran for the placement of mines in international waters. The target destined for our attack was the Iranian occupied SASSON GOSP used as a staging platform for small boat attacks. The platform had to be destroyed with precision to prevent damage to the separation platform which could have resulted in environmental damage.

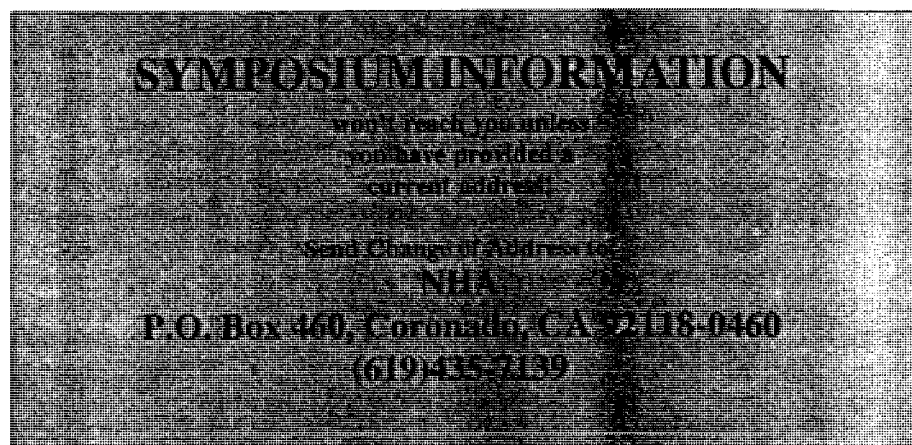
On 17 April, our tactical mission brief

was "not a drill". Go/No-Go criteria, ordnance loads, weapons conditions, intelligence briefings, target familiarization, and tactical recovery of downed aircraft and personnel were but a few of those often briefed items that were so important as they were that day. Aircraft were preflighted, and ordnance was loaded. Each crewmember reviewed his procedures and ensured his personal readiness. Some slept. Others were not able. Others continues to plan their mission.

At 0615 on 18 April, the launch of eight Marine helicopters and one H-60 acquired from SAMUEL B. ROBERTS commenced. Our endless training and rehearsing was about to pay dividends in a way we never suspected.

At 0755, a five minute warning was given to the platform and the initial evacuation of Iranians via tug boat began. Several volleys of fire were received from the GOSP and returned by USS MERRILL and USS MCCORMICK. This was interspersed with several uncontested evacuations from the GOSP. At 0940, naval gunfire preparation fires ceased and AH-1T (TOW) Cobras commenced their suppression/destruction attacks. Two CH-46s and one UH-1N Huey followed in trace from different directions to insert the assault element aboard the platform, while a second Huey remained airborne for command and control. Having been warned over the radios that a burst of fire from the platform was seen during our ingress, our senses were peaked. Secondary explosions from the stored ordnance aboard the GOSP nearly necessitated the emergency evacuation of our troops, but as the fires died, the teams were able to

Continued on page 30



Helo Career Patterns.....continued from page 29

3. Except for an occasional Flag LT or Flag Secretary, helo pilots are systematically excluded from the CARGRU or CRUDESGRU staff aboard our forward deployed CVBG's. With typically a dozen helos in the battle group the CVBG Commander has no expertise to draw upon, and helo aviators miss a superb opportunity to enhance their warfare skills.

4. As LPH's begin to leave the fleet in favor of the LPD's the major first sea command for helo aviators departs. There are no readily apparent plans to address the situation.

5. Most critically, there appears to be no group within the chain of command that is actively dealing with the question of career patterns for helo pilots in diverse warfare specialties. The TACAIR community recently carved out a super CAG program. The surface community recently made significant career path alterations to allow junior officers to better develop certain areas of expertise. The MP community continues to recruit heavily and "fence" more challenging jobs. This does not occur in the Helo commu-

nity. We haven't yet gotten beyond writing point papers, most of which refute point papers written by other helo pilots.

The Future

In the midst of all this change what should helo junior officers do? The first thing to do is set a goal, as ambitious a goal as you want and work as hard as you can to get there. Secondly, make sure you have fun doing it. The helo community has, collectively, the best missions, the best aircraft and the best people, so all the ingredients for that most important benefit of our business, JOB SATISFACTION, are there if you don't dilute them with too much hand wringing over career patterns and the like.

While asking our body of junior officers to work hard and not be overly concerned about career patterns we must simultaneously ask our naval leadership to be more ambitious and creative in tapping into the vast reservoir of ability and talent that makes up our naval helicopter aviator community in order to get the best man for the best job in a vast number of challenging billets. The burden of proof is on our senior decision makers to show cause

why, for example:

- An HS pilot shouldn't compete for a CV Commanding Officer slot.

- A SWO qualified LAMPS pilot shouldn't be Chief of Staff of a CARGRU.

- A SWO qualified HC pilot shouldn't command an AOE or AOR as a sequential command.

- A qualified ASW pilot shouldn't serve as ASWC for a battle group.

The time to address these questions is now. As little as five years ago helicopter pilots seeking these challenging billets simply didn't have the requisite professional qualifications. That has changed radically. More and more of our officers are serving in Washington, D.C. and gaining valuable insights into how the Navy functions. If we can motivate "the system" to select THE BEST QUALIFIED OFFICER for the job regardless of community affiliation, then the future for helo pilots will be exceptionally bright.

CDR Galdorisi is currently the Executive Officer aboard the USS NEW ORLEANS (LPH-11).

From The Bottom.....continued from page 9

laundry (I suspect one of my anti-holiday guerilla roommates), where it remained for about two weeks (i.e., the usual sock laundry jail term) It finally showed up on my rack, all grey and wrinkled beyond recognition with a note that read:

" Dear Sir,

Navy Laundinst 88452.34 B, Section IV, para 3

strictly prohibits the marking of personal clothing

with glitter and/or glitter substitutes.

This is why

people lose socks in the laundry, sir.

We recommend

a standard laundry pen."

A copy of the instruction was attached with the appropriate sections highlighted in yellow.

If you follow the instructions above, you should find yourself, for maybe the first time in your life, completely ready for Christmas by Pearl Harbor Day: decora-

tions up, cards mailed, and free from the anguish and heartbreak of last minute shopping. You can just sit back, listen to the music, and wait for incoming cards. They should arrive about 15 January or so.

Yeah, it'll still probably be one of the worst holiday seasons of your life anyway. Sorta comes with the territory, unfortunately. But the way I see it, better a lousy Christmas season than none at all, right?

Trust me.

HML/A-167.....continued from page 18

continue their search. The GOSP was secure at 1005. Demolition and photo teams and intelligence personnel were landed aboard the platform and everyone was finally removed by 1303. Specially placed demolition charges finished our task at 1310.

Our mission was planned, briefed, and executed with the precision expected. Along with U.S. Navy attacks on the SIRRI GOSP, as well as against Iranian combatants attempting to counter attack,

we demonstrated our capabilities to ourselves, the United States, and to the world - those capabilities to which we train but are seldom tasked to execute.

On that uneasy evening of 18 April 1988, while detached from TRENTON to work aboard USS WAINWRIGHT and while investigating a surface contact believed to be Iranian, an AH-1T (TOW) Cobra was lost at sea. Its crew's last transmissions were of a radar lock on a maneuvering aircraft to their front. Their

loss will remain with our squadron as a constant reminder of the extreme price we pay for our freedoms. Our training must be intense because we may be required to use that knowledge at any time. It should never be "routine".

CAPT Inhoff was the Logistics Department head with HML/A-167 aboard the USS TRENTON (LPD-14) in the Persian Gulf from February through June of 1988. (Photos courtesy of the author)



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS TRENTON (LPD-14)
770 NEW YORK 03588-1716

5080

Ser 084

28 FEB 1989

From: Commanding Officer, USS TRENTON (LPD-14)

To: LT (b) (6) USN, Military Editor, Surface Warfare Magazine,
Commonwealth Building, 1200 Wilson Boulevard, Rm 782, Arlington, VA
22209

Subj: ARTICLE INPUT FOR SURFACE WARFARE MAGAZINE

- Encl: (1) TRENTON/MAGTF 2-88 Team on Duty in the Gulf
(2) USS TRENTON 230820Z MAY 88
(3) USS TRENTON 300735Z MAY 88
(4) Presentation of Joint Meritorious Unit Award

1. Thank you for your letter of 6 February. We are eagerly awaiting the publication of an article covering what, for us, was a very memorable 24 hours. Unfortunately, your letter was not received until just recently, limiting our ability to develop material for the article other than what has already been published. Accordingly, please find enclosed 4 press releases drafted by the TRENTON at various times during the Persian Gulf deployment. I believe you will find the specific information you requested as well as some additional background information.

2. In addition to the award of the Joint Meritorious Unit Award and Combat Action Ribbon to all hands on board TRENTON on 18 April, LT (b) (6) (b) (6) TRENTON's then-assistant air boss (he is presently the Air Department head in TRENTON), CAPT (b) (6) USMC, TRENTON's Combat Cargo Officer, and LTJG (b) (6) the aircraft handling officer, were awarded Navy Achievement Medals for their contributions to PRAYING MANTIS. As members of TRENTON's air department, LT (b) (6) and LTJG (b) (6) were instrumental to the successful launch, refueling, rearming, and recovery of 9 helicopters from the deck of the TRENTON (Interestingly, 1 of the 9 helicopters was the MK III LAMPS from the USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS. That LAMPS det had cross-decked to the TRENTON following the damaging of the ROBERTS by an Iranian mine on 14 April). CAPT (b) (6) was recognized for his role in organizing and supervising the rapid breakout and resupply of ammunition from TRENTON's cargo magazines in support of the helicopters and ground forces involved in the operation. For his work on the flight deck on 18 APR ABH1 (b) (6) received a Navy Commendation Medal from ADM Crowe during the latter's visit to the Gulf in April 1988 (described further in enclosure ()).

3. Also of note; the 2 USMC Cobra helicopter pilots killed on the night of 18 April, although temporarily operating from the WAINWRIGHT, were part of Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force 2-88, the USMC force embarked in TRENTON. These two pilots, Captain (b) (6) and Captain (b) (6), were killed while investigating a suspected Iranian Naval contact in the Gulf. Both had flown their AH-1T "Cobra" helicopter in PRAYING MANTIS earlier in the day. They were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for their action in support of the Marine raid on the Sassan Gas/Oil Separation Platform.

4. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (autovon) 564-1643 or 565-6354, or commercial 804-444-1643 or 445-6354, if I can be of any further assistance.

Respectfully,
(b) (6)

by direction

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U N C L A S S I F I E D

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COMPHIBGRU TWO
COMPHIBRON TWELVE

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UNCLAS //N05720//

SUBJ: PROPOSED PRESS RELEASE

1. PASS TO CODE N004, FORCE PAU

1. THE FOLLOWING IS SUBMITTED FOR POSSIBLE RELEASE TO SOUNDINGS,
THE GATOR AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS AS APPROPRIATE.

2. CJCS VISIT TO USS TRENTON (LPD 14).

ON MAY 5, 1988 ADMIRAL WILLIAM J. CROWE, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT
CHIEFS OF STAFF, VISITED THE USS TRENTON. TRENTON IS CURRENTLY
DEPLOYED TO THE ARABIAN GULF. WHILE ON BOARD, ADM CROWE PRESIDED
OVER AN AWARDS CEREMONY, ATTENDED A LUNCHEON IN HIS HONOR, MET
WITH MEMBERS OF THE CREW AND WITNESSED AN ASSAULT DEMONSTRATION
BY THE MEMBERS OF THE EMBARKED MARINE AIR GROUND TASK FORCE
2-88.

DURING THE AWARDS CEREMONY ADM CROWE PRESENTED THE NAVY COMMENDATION
MEDAL TO ABHI RICKY WOODS FOR HIS ROLE IN OPERATION PRAYING MANTIS,
THE RECENT U.S. STRIKE AGAINST THE SIRRI AND SASSAN OIL PLATFORMS
OWNED BY IRAN. THE ACTION WAS IN RETALIATION FOR THE CRIPPLING
OF THE FRIGATE USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS WHICH STRUCK AN IRANIAN MINE
IN THE ARABIAN GULF ON 14 APRIL 1988. IN ADDITION TO THE AWARDS
CEREMONY ADM CROWE RE-ENLISTED BT2 (b) (6) MK2 (b) (6)
(b) (6) SK3 (b) (6) AND DKS (b) (6)

IN HIS REMARKS ADM CROWE CALLED THE MEN AND WOMEN SERVING IN THE
GULF THE GUTS OF THE NAVY. HE ADDED, "I WANT TO PASS ON TO YOU
CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, NOT ONLY FOR YOUR
RECENT COMBAT MISSION BUT FOR THE WORK YOU'VE DONE FOR THE PAST
THREE MONTHS. YOU'VE SHOWN THAT YOU ARE PEOPLE WHO KNOW WHAT THEY
ARE DOING, PEOPLE WITH A LOT OF GUTS, PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO
BEAR THE RISK. IT'S A PRIVILEGE TO BE HERE."

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U N C L A S S I F I E D

ROUTINE
230020Z MAY 88

PAGE 1

Encl (2)

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U N C L A S S I F I E D

ROUTINE
300735Z MAY 88
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FM USS TRENTON

TO COMNAVSTAFLANT NORFOLK VA

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UNCLAS //NO5720//

SUBJ: PROPOSED PRESS RELEASE

1. PASS TO CODE 0004, FORCE MAJ

2. THE FOLLOWING IS SUBMITTED FOR POSSIBLE RELEASE TO SOUNDINGS, THE GATOR, NAVY TIMES AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS AS APPROPRIATE

3. TITLE: MILE STONES....MILES FROM HOME.

ON 03 MAY 1988, THE USS TRENTON (LPD 14) RECORDED HER 25,000TH HELICOPTER LANDING. THE AIR PLAN WAS A "ROUTINE" LAUNCH IN THE MORNING WITH FIVE AIRCRAFT CONDUCTING MINE COUNTER-MEASURE OPERATIONS AND DECK LANDING QUALIFICATIONS. ABH1(AW) RICKY WOOD, THE LANDING SIGNALMAN ENLISTED (LSE), DIRECTED THE CH-46E HELICOPTER TO ITS INTENDED POINT OF LANDING. INTERESTINGLY, ABH1(AW) WOOD WAS ALSO THE LSE WHEN THE TRENTON COMPLETED ITS 20,000 LANDING IN SEPTEMBER OF 1986. THE HELICOPTER CREW CONSISTED OF CAPT. (b)(6) 1ST LT. (b)(6) AND SGT. (b)(6) FROM HMLA-167.

A CAKE CUTTING CEREMONY WAS CONDUCTED THE NEXT DAY ON THE FLIGHT DECK WHERE TRENTON'S COMMANDING OFFICER, CAPT. ROBERT M. GUNWELL, USA, CONTINGENCY MARINE AIR GROUND TASK FORCE 2-88 COMMANDING OFFICER, COL. WILLIAM KAKOW, USMC, AND HMLA-167 COMMANDING OFFICER, LTCOL LARRY CUTLAW, USMC, EACH COMMENTED ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE SHIP THROUGHOUT ITS CAREER AND DURING THE CURRENT DEPLOYMENT.

"IN DATE, DURING THIS DEPLOYMENT, THE TRENTON HAS COMPLETED MORE THAN 1,600 AIRCRAFT MOVES AND OVER 2,700 LANDINGS," SAID CAPT. GUNWELL. HE CONTINUED, "THAT'S MORE THAN 10 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL FLIGHT DECK LANDINGS CONDUCTED IN THE 17 YEAR HISTORY OF THE SHIP. THIS ACCOMPLISHMENT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WITHOUT THE HARD WORK OF THE LSE'S, THE HANDLEKS, THE FUELING CREWS, THE PILOTS, THE MAINTENANCE CREWS, AND THE SUPERB COORDINATION BETWEEN THE AIR DEPARTMENT AND THE SQUADRON. THANKS TO THIS KIND OF TEAMWORK TRENTON'S READINESS HAS NEVER BEEN BETTER."

IN ADDITION TO HER EIGHT MARINE HELICOPTERS, TRENTON IS ALSO OPERATING A SH-60B LAMPS MKIII HELICOPTER TEMPORARILY ASSIGNED TO TRENTON FROM THE USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS AFTER THE LATTER

EC XO OPS AUP CIO CICO SIG ADM AIR CCO CHAP COMM DECK DEN EMU LEG
ENG MED MCPD NAV PER SCOL SUP 3M CT UOD GMF SG SUPE SKIB

U N C L A S S I F I E D

ROUTINE
300735Z MAY 88

PAGE 1

Encl (3)

UNCLASSIFIED

ROUTINE

300735Z MAY 88

STUCK A NINE. TRENTON CURRENTLY HOLDS INTERIM CERTIFICATION AS A SIX-SPOT, MULTI-LAUNCH/RECOVERY FLIGHT DECK PLATFORM. TRENTON'S AIR OFFICER, LOUK BENNETT STATED, HE ADDED, "WITH THE AID OF THE HELICOPTER EXPEDITIONARY REFUELING SYSTEM (HERS) HE CAN SIMULTANEOUSLY LAND, REFUEL AND LAUNCH UP TO SEVEN AIRCRAFT AT A TIME. THIS IS DEFINITELY A FIRST FOR AN LHD."

TRENTON IS CURRENTLY DEPLOYED TO THE JOINT TASK FORCE MIDDLE EAST WITH A "MOBILE" MISSION. THE FIRST MISSION IS TO SUPPORT CONTINGENCY MARINE AIR GROUND TASK FORCE (CMAGTF) 2-88. THE CMAGTF 2-88 AIR COMBAT ELEMENT IS A COMPOSITE HELICOPTER SQUADRON, HMLA-167, WHICH EMBARKED TRENTON WITH EIGHT AIRCRAFT INCLUDING AH-1 COBRAS, UH-1H HOVEYS AND CH-53 SEA KING ASSAULT HELICOPTERS.

THE SECOND MISSION ASSIGNED TO TRENTON IS TO PROVIDE "MOTHERSHIP" SERVICES TO THE 6 MINESWEEPERS IN THE ARABIAN GULF. THESE SERVICES INCLUDE TRANSFERRING FUEL AND WATER, REPAIRING EQUIPMENT, SUPPLYING FRESH AND FROZEN FOODS, SOJAS, AND PROVIDING SHIP SERVICES SUCH AS MEDICAL, DENTAL, POST OFFICE, BARBER SHOP, SHIP'S STORE AND DISBURSING.

TRENTON'S FLIGHT DECK OPERATIONS WITH NINE AIRCRAFT EMBARKED HAVE BECOME MORE PRACTICED AND POLISHED EVERY DAY. TRENTON, THE "GULF-GATOR", HAS PLACED SAFETY FIRST AS SHE SETS HER SIGHTS ON 25,000 MORE MISHAP FREE LANDINGS. EVERYONE ON TRENTON IS PROUD OF HER RECORD. IN THE GULF, WHEN A TRENTON SAILOR OR MARINE SAYS, "NOBODY DOES IT BETTER", HE IS TAKEN AT HIS WORD.

BT

0913

NNNN

UNCLASSIFIED

ROUTINE

300735Z MAY 88

FROM : Public Affairs Officer USS TRENTON (LPD-14)
TO : DIRECTOR of NAVAL History

SUBJ: ~~ADD~~ ADDITIONS TO 1988 COMMAND HISTORY.

ENCL: (A) HSL-44 DET 5 BERTHING & WORKING SPACES
(B) STRENGTH REPORT of CMAGTF 2-88
(C) MAGTF 2-88 Phone Directory

1. THE enclosures (A-C) are submitted to be Added to the 1988 Ship's history.

Very Respectfully,

LT  (b) (6)
LPD-14

ACK'D

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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TO CJTFME

INFO ZEN/USS TRENTON \$\$\$

ADMIN SUPD BAHRAIN

MEF NSWTU LANT

MEF NSWTU PAC

BT

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ //N05320//

SUBJ: STRENGTH REPORT (U)

A. CJTFME 081730Z MAR 88

1. ~~(C)~~ IAW THE REF THE FOL IS SUB:

A. ~~(C)~~ CONTINGENCY MAGTF 2-88

B. ~~(C)~~ COL W.M. RAKOW, 182, 1 JUL 83

C. ~~(C)~~ PERM ASSIGNED: MC 47 ME 352 NC 1 NE 9: TOTAL 409

D. ~~(C)~~ TDY/TAD: 1 CIVILIAN

2. ~~(C)~~ CONTINGENCY MAGTF 2-88 IS EMBARKED ABOARD USS TRENTON
WITH FOL ELEMENTS/UNITS/DETS:

A. ~~(C)~~ DET, 2D ANGLICO

CAPT V.C. SCOGGIN, 4522, 1 MAY 86

OFF 1, ENL 5

B. ~~(C)~~ DET, 2D FORCE RECON CO

CAPT T.P. KRAFT, 710 (1/LT), 1 MAR 88

OFF 1, ENL 9,

C. ~~(C)~~ DET, 2D RADIO BN

CAPT T.A. REEDER, 1835, 1 JAN 83

OFF 1, ENL 7

D. ~~(C)~~ GROUND COMBAT ELEMENT (DET 1, 1STBN, 2D MAR)

MAJ C.S. BRINKLEY, 621, 1 OCT 81 (LTCOL SEL)

OFF 5, ENL 82,

COMPANY B, 1STBN, 2D MAR

CAPT ~~(b)(6)~~, 1841, 1 JAN 83

E. ~~(C)~~ AVN COMBAT ELEMENT (HML/A-167(-)(REIN))

LTCOL L.D. OUTLAW, 477 (MAJ), 1 JUL 81 (PROCKED)

OFF 26, ENL 137, CIV 1

F. ~~(C)~~ COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT ELEMENT (CSSD-20)

CAPT K.D. WICKWIRE, 749, 1 OCT 81

OFF 2, ENL 26

3. ~~(C)~~ CONTINGENCY MAGTF 2-88 DETS IN THEATER NOT EMBARKED
ABOARD USS TRENTON:

A. ~~(C)~~ DET AT ASU, BAHRAIN (OFF 1, ENL 8)

OIC 1STLT P.A. VANHEMEL (CI OFFICER), 181, 1 MAY 86

MK II PROGRAM (DET FORCE RECON): ENL 7

2-88(3)

~~CO XO OPS~~ AOP CIC CICO SIG ~~ADM~~ AIR CCO CHAP ~~COMM~~ DECK DENT EMO LEG
ENG MED MCPO NAV ~~PER~~ SCOL ~~EMC~~ SUP 3M CT DOD ~~IC~~ GMF SG ~~BUPE~~ INT. ~~AS~~

①

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PRIORITY
101400Z MAR 88

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PRIORITY
101400Z MAR 88

- DET SUPPLY; ENL 1
B. (C) DET MSB HERCULES
2NDLT (b) (6) 270, 18 MAR 86
OFF 1, ENL 37
C. (C) DET MSB WIMBROWN VII
1STLT (b) (6) 3781R, 22 MAY 87
OFF 1, ENL 30

DECL: 31 JUL 88

BT

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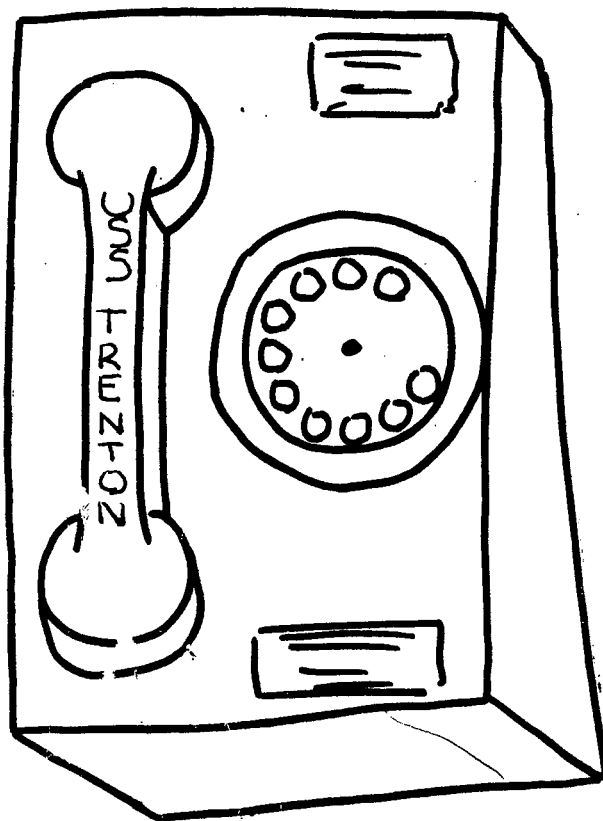
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PRIORITY
101400Z MAR 88

HSL-44
DET-5
BERTHING AND WORKING SPACES

	<u>ROOM</u>	<u>PHONE</u>
1. LCDR (b) (6) OFFICER-IN-CHARGE	01-114-2-L -MAJOR (b) (6)	7826 S RM
2. LCDR (b) (6) MAINTENANCE OFFICER	01-112-2-L -MAJOR (b) (6)	7112 S RM
3. LT (b) (6) OPERATIONS OFFICER	01-112-2-L -MAJOR (b) (6)	7112 S RM
4. LT (b) (6) TRAINING OFFICER	01-108-5-L -TRANSIENT OFFICERS	7616 BKRM
5. LTJG (b) (6) ADMIN/DIVISION OFFICER	01-108-5-L -TRANSIENT OFFICERS	7616 BKRM
6. AXC (b) (6) MAINTENANCE CPO	1-53-3L -AFTER CPO QUARTERS	7610 RK 15
7. ENLISTED MAINTENANCE AND AIRCREW PERSONNEL	2-200-1L -TROOP BERTHING	
8. MAINTENANCE CONTROL OFFICE	1-124-6-Q -AUX RADIO	RM
9. HELICOPTER OPERATIONS/ADMIN OFFICE	2-91-4-L -COMBAT CARGO	7226-7018 RM

MAGTF 2-88



DIRECTORY

1 FEB 88

MAGTF WORKING SPACES

CO office/state room	01-52-2-L	7619
XO office/state room	01-96-2-L	7175
S-1	03-96-1-L	
Joint Intel Center		
Troop Ops/LFOC	02-65-2-C	7722/7865
S-4	Upper Vehicle	
CSSD Supply	Upper Vehicle	
CEO office/state room	01-102-0-L	7183
Ready Room	02 Level Starboard	
Sick Bay/BAS	2-184-1-L	7159

DENTAL
PLS FWD AS
ADDENDUM TO
CMD HISTORY -
MAY BE USEFUL
R/D'S

MAGTF_BERTHING

MAGTF_COMD_ELEMENT

CO	01-52-2-L	7619
XO	01-96-2-L	7175
S1	01-108-6-L	7215 7202
S2	01-100-4-L	7165
Staff Counter Intel	01-100-2-L	7135
S3	01-100-4-L	7165
S3A	01-108-6-L	7215
AIR	01-108-6-L	7215
S4	01-102-0-L	7183
Medical	01-108-0-L	7115
CEO	01-102-0-L	7183
OIC, Det RadBn	01-102-0-L	7183
OIC, Det ANGLiCo	01-102-0-L	7183
OIC, Det Recon	01-100-2-L	7135

ACE

CO	01-96-3-L	7626
XO	01-112-2-L	7112
OP	01-96-1-L	7463
AMO	01-96-1-L	7463

GCE

CO	01-96-2-L	7175
CO, Co B 1/2	01-108-2-L	7647
XO, Co B 1/2	01-102-1-L	7467
Team Embark Officer	01-102-1-L	7467

CSSE

CO	01-108-2-L	7647
Supply Officer	01-100-2-L	7135

<u>MSgt_Berthing</u>	2-96-3-L	7655
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<u>Corpsman_Berthing</u>	2-184-1-L	7159
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OFFICERS

Col (b) (6)	01-52-2-L	7619
LtCol (b) (6)	01-96-3-L	7626
Maj (b) (6)	01-96-2-L	7175
Maj (b) (6) Maj (b) (6)	01-96-1-L	7463
Maj (b) (6) Maj (b) (6)	01-100-4-L	7165
Maj (b) (6)	01-114-2-L	7618 <i>LCOR TM</i>
Maj (b) (6)	01-112-2-L	7112
Capt (b) (6)	01-102-0-L	7183
Capt		
Capt	01-102-2-L	7685
Capt		
Capt	01-108-1-L	7641
Capt		
Capt	01-108-2-L	7647
Capt	01-108-6-L	7215
CWO (b) (6)		
Capt (b) (6)	01-108-0-L	7115
Lt (USN) (b) (6) Lt (b) (6)		
Lt (b) (6)		
Lt (b) (6) Lt (b) (6) Lt (b) (6)	01-100-2-L	7135
Lt (b) (6) Lt (b) (6) Lt (b) (6)	01-102-1-L	7467
Lt (b) (6) Lt (b) (6)		
Lt (b) (6) Lt (b) (6)	01-114-0-L	7466
Lt (b) (6) Lt (b) (6) Lt (b) (6)		
Lt (b) (6) Lt (b) (6)	01-114-1-L	7036
Lt (b) (6) Lt (b) (6) CWO2 (b) (6)		

[Apr 1988]

The crew performed near Herculean damage control efforts, including welding cables to the hull to keep her from breaking in half, and saved their ship. Nearby aircraft and ships performed medical evacuation and SAR, including dock landing ship *Trenton* (LPD 14,ⁱ Capt. Robert M. Nutwell), which came about to set a course for the stricken frigate. *Trenton* rendezvoused with *Samuel B. Roberts* and provided equipment and fresh water to the heroic crew, as well as supporting operations that located the minefield.ⁱⁱ

Trenton received one of the 10 wounded sailors, who was badly burned about his upper body, arms, neck and face. After “thoroughly” examining and stabilizing him, the ship’s crew arranged to fly him on to Administrative Support Unit (ASU) Bahrain for further care.

On the 16th, Battle Group Foxtrot ships began “repositioning” for potential “execution” of plans against the Iranians. Commodore Perkins departed *Enterprise* for embarkation on board *Lynde McCormick*, *Enterprise* becoming the antiair warfare commander for Operation Praying Mantis. The next day the marines tactical action brief on board *Trenton* was “not a drill,” as they examined their go/no-go criteria. Sailors and marines preflighted aircraft and loaded ordnance. That night some men slept, while others could not and composed final letters to loved ones or struggled with how they would handle the horror of battle.

“The Largest U.S. Naval Battle Since World War II”

Three SAGs were formed. Bravo (Commodore Perkins), consisting of *Trenton* and destroyers *Merrill* (DD 976, Comdr. Caig Covington) and *Lynde McCormick*, and Charlie (Capt. James Chandler), comprising cruiser *Wainwright* (CG 28, Capt. Chandler), and frigates *Simpson* (FFG 56) and *Bagley*, assaulted Sassan and Sirri GOSPs, respectively. Embarked on board *Trenton* was elements of Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force (CMAGTF) 2-88.ⁱⁱⁱ

Delta, the third group, operated off Bandar Abbas tasked with neutralizing the Iranian fleet therein, especially *Sabalan*. Hawkeyes from *Enterprise* flew AEW tracking and analyzed targets, along with air intercept control, F-14As flew CAP and A-6Es and A-7Es performed surface CAP.

“This is probably the largest U.S. Naval battle since World War II,” was how Capt. Robert J. “Rocky” Spane, the ship’s skipper, described the day long action,^{iv} which lasted from 0730–1900 on Monday 18 April 1988.

“Highly Motivated”

Surface Action Group Bravo moved into place by dawn on the 18th. The first of eight helos lifted off at 0615, and both destroyers took station 4,000 yards to the east of Sassan

shortly thereafter, steaming in a north-south “racetrack” pattern, while *Trenton* stood ready seven miles to the southeast.^v

These acts of extreme generosity on the part of the Americans began to interfere with the operation, however, as aircraft stayed aloft longer than planned and started to run dry. On board *Trenton* the marines and sailors cleverly rigged two 500 gallon helicopter expedient refueling systems bladders on the port side, enabling them to simultaneously refuel four helos instead of just two.^{vi}

An assault element of 42 marines in two CH-46Es and a UH-1N led the strike against Sassan, while a second Huey stayed aloft as a command and control aircraft, the total force numbering 150 marines from CMAGTF 2-88 from *Trenton*.^{vii} As they prepared to assault the GOSP, however, several fires and the possibility of booby traps delayed their choice of landing zones. Finally, marines rappelled down ropes from hovering Sea Knights at 0931.

The marines immediately began searching the GOSP, using “standard close-quarters battle tactics.” In addition to their usual arms, many of the assault troops had been reequipped with MP5 9 mm MGs, “flash bang” grenades to blind Iranians and MX-300 handheld radios with whisper mikes. Their drive across the complex came to a sudden halt at 0945 when an intense fire on Platform No. 2 caused some of the 23 and 12.7 mm ammunition to cook off. Secondary explosions and fuel spills threatened to engulf the entire GOSP, and the assault element commander, Capt. Thomas M. Hastings, Company B, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, alerted the SAG staff for a possible emergency extraction.^{viii}

Fortunately, the fires were contained, sparing the complex from blowing itself sky high with the assault element on board. The marines continued searching and secured Sassan by 1005, allowing photo, EOD and intelligence teams to land two minutes later. The Americans recovered one of the ZU 23-2s, an RPG-7 and a 12.7 mm MG, and destroyed the other two ZU 23-2s in place. The last Americans were off the GOSP at 1303, and seven minutes later facilities that “weathered” the battle were destroyed by 1,300 lb of demolitions, which triggered 20 minutes of explosions seen and felt for miles.

Radio traffic indicated at least one Iranian killed and another wounded, though additional casualties may have been inflicted. Leaving the platform a “smoking ruin,” SAG Bravo came about, having struck a “decisive blow for freedom of navigation.”^{ix}

Perkins also noted: “We believe that Sassan was a communications and surveillance station... We found weapons, ammunition and communications gear. Referring to the seizure of the rig, he added “It was a textbook example of how a combined Navy-Marine Corps operation ought to go.” The weapons were of types utilized by Iranians in their speedboat raids.

Warrior 1-2

Late in the afternoon *Wainwright's* CIC reported "hostile surface contacts" about 15 miles to the east. Warriors 1-1 and 1-2, AH-1Ts,^x Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMLA)-167, embarked on board *Trenton*, were the only helos nearby, and both crews had already put in a full day. As men towed Warrior 1-1 off the helo landing spot preparing to secure for the evening, Warrior 1-2 (TOW), Aircraft No. 34, BuNo. 161018, Capts Kenneth W. Hill and Stephen C. Leslie, both marines, responded to a call from the cruiser to identify the pips, at 2015.

Closing upon the contact at 2101, Warrior 1-2 suddenly reported "being locked up" and dropped from *Wainwright's* radar. An immediate CSAR of the area failed to reveal wreckage or survivors, though it is possible that Warrior 1-2 flew into the water attempting to avoid enemy fire. The Americans recovered some wreckage on 15 May, though it did not appear to show battle damage. Hill and Leslie both later posthumously received the DFC for their heroic actions throughout the battle.^{xi}

ⁱ *Trenton's* crew already had a close brush with death at 2330 on 3 March when two Iranian speed boats approached *Trenton* and her escort, frigate *John A. Moore* (FFG 19, Comdr. John W. Bonnett, with Magus 34 from HSL 35 Det 2), at high speed in the northern Gulf.

Trenton warned the Iranians by radio and fired flares, but the terrorists continued rapidly closing, so both crews manned battle stations. *John A. Moore's* gunners fired 97 76 mm rounds, and a .50 caliber MG crew on board *Trenton* joined in the thunderous cacophony, forcing the Iranians to veer away, but sailors failed to recover debris or survivors and could not confirm damage.

After *Samuel B. Robert* struck the mine her SH-60B LAMPS Mk III from HSL-44 Det 5 transferred to *Trenton* for the remainder of the deployment. This raised her helo compliment to nine, a tight fit on her small flight deck.

Two helo crews, either AH-1Ts or UH-1Ns, would fly parallel to and forward of the convoys, sweeping the way for floating mines and small boats. Aircrew flying from the ship logged over 2,200 flight hours and 3,500 landings during this deployment; *Trenton* (LPD 14) Command History Report 1988; *From CO, USS Trenton (LPD 14) To ComNavSurforLant Subj. Proposed Press Release. 16 January 1989*; Inhoff, Capt. Kenneth G. "HMLA-167 Presence in the Persian Gulf," p. 18.

ⁱⁱ As with the *Iran Ajr* Incident, these operations became crucial for tracking down the culprits behind the minelaying. That afternoon marine helo crews from HMLA-167, operating from *Trenton*, discovered, videotaped and helped destroy three more freshly laid mines. Examining their "lot numbers" revealed them to be from the same series which *Iran Ajr* laid; Rakow, Col. William M. "Marines in the Gulf - 1988." *Marine Corps Gazette*, December 1988, p. 64.

ⁱⁱⁱ Embarking the Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force (CMAGTF) required "configuration," with the crew installing Marine Mobile Maintenance Facility (MMF) field support vans on *Trenton's* Upper Vehicle Storage Deck, which required modification to her electrical distribution system.

Four new deck edge launch/recovery spots were certified for her flight deck, enabling the ship to operate up to eight helos, and additional vans were installed topside to serve as a ready room and administrative office (a total of six MMF vans and three MMF supply vans).

Activated on 23 November 1987, CMAGTF 2-88 numbered 350 marines, some of whom had just returned from deployment with the 26th MEU Special Operations Capable (SOC), principally: a force reconnaissance platoon (Capt. (b) (6)); the ground combat element (GCE, Maj. (b) (6) (b) (6) Det 1, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines); the aviation combat element (ACE) of eight helos from HMLA-167 (Lt. Col. (b) (6)); four AH-1T Cobras, two UN-1N Hueys, and two CH-46E Sea Knights; and the combat support service element.

Some of the marines in the GCE served on board MSB *Hercules* and returned with a good dose of special operations experience. The marines worked up hard before deploying, and in early January four helo crews flew into the Gulf of Mexico to better familiarize themselves with oil rigs.

The marines' assignments included:

- Armed escort/reconnaissance in support of U.S. flagged ships/convoys.
- Surveillance, reconnaissance, and intelligence collection.
- Security for mobile sea bases.
- Standby reaction and reinforcement force.
- Logistic support.
- Mobile training teams.
- Contingency operations.

Trenton (LPD 14) Command History Report 1988; Inhoff, Capt. Kenneth G. "HML/A-167 Presence in the Persian Gulf," p. 17; Rakow, Col. William M. "Marines in the Gulf – 1988." Marine Corps Gazette, December 1988, pp. 62–64.

^{iv} "Battle Group FOXTROT bombs Iranian targets." Shuttle, April 19, 1988, Tuesday Edition, USS *Enterprise* (CVN-65), p. 1.

^v Rakow, Col. William M. "Marines in the Gulf – 1988." Marine Corps Gazette, December 1988, p. 66.

^{vi} Rakow, Col. William M. "Marines in the Gulf – 1988." Marine Corps Gazette, December 1988, p. 66.

^{vii} During Praying Mantis *Trenton* not only relieved an LPH as the host ship for the CMAGTF, but also served as "Hotel Trenton," an LSD as the "mother ship" for up to six minesweepers; *Trenton* (LPD 14) Command History Report 1988; Smith, D.H. "Trenton/MAGTF 2-88 Team on Duty in the Gulf." Article Input for Surface Warfare Magazine, 28 February 1989.

^{viii} Rakow, Col. William M. "Marines in the Gulf – 1988." Marine Corps Gazette, December 1988, p. 67.

^{ix} *From CO, USS Trenton (LPD 14) To ComNavSurforLant Subj. Proposed Press Release. 16 January 1989*; On 20 December 1988, *Trenton* received the Joint Meritorious Unit Award for Praying Mantis; Smith, D.H. "Trenton/MAGTF 2-88 Team on Duty in the Gulf." Article Input for Surface Warfare Magazine, 28 February 1989.

^x HMLA-169 became the first marine squadron in the Gulf equipped with AH-1W Super Cobras in inventory, deploying on board amphibious assault ship *Okinawa* (LPH 3), on 8 October 1987. Firing AGM-114 Hellfires, TOWs and AIM-9 Sidewinders, and fitted with improved heads-up displays and bigger engines, AH-1Ws were a deadly mix, however, none were assigned to this squadron for Praying Mantis; *Naval Aviation*, p. 356.

^{xi} Rakow, Col. William M. "Marines in the Gulf – 1988." Marine Corps Gazette, December 1988, pp. 67–68.